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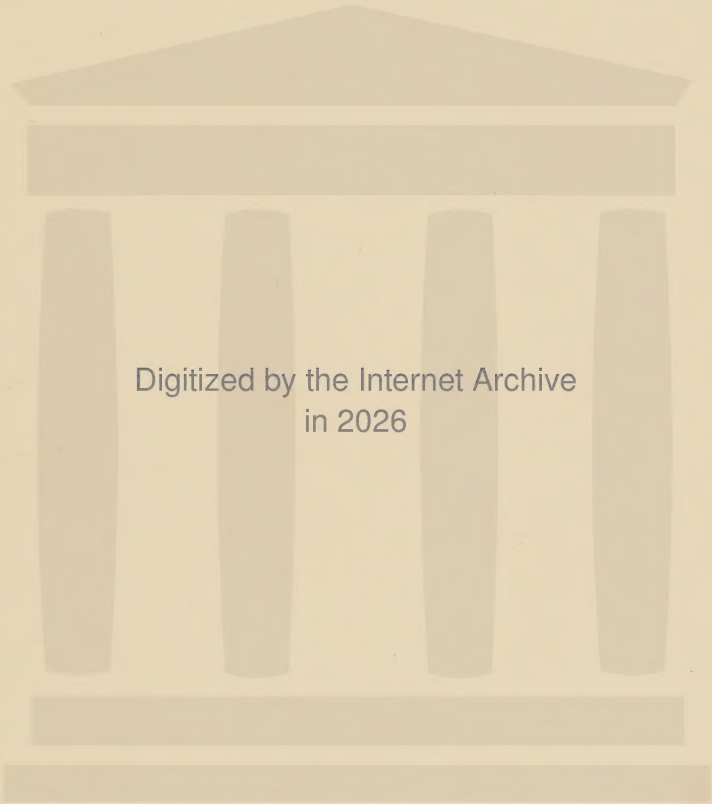
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SOME LITERARY ECCENTRICS

BY

JOHN FYVIE

AUTHOR OF 'SOME FAMOUS WOMEN OF WIT AND BEAUTY'

WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE word Eccentric is not to be taken in every case as a term of reproach; for, as John Stuart Mill long ago pointed out, eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded. Moreover, the eleven Literary Eccentrics here presented exhibit the quality in very varying degree; ranging from just that spice of singularity which raises a man above the commonplace, to an excess of morbidity which places him on the border-land of insanity.

The first and second of the following studies originally appeared in *The Independent Review*; the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh in *Temple Bar*; the eighth and ninth in *Macmillan's Magazine*; and they are now reprinted by the courtesy of the editors of those periodicals. The third, tenth, and eleventh are here printed for the first time.

J. F.

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'JOHN BUNCLE' AND ITS AUTHOR

In one of his *Round Table* essays, Hazlitt makes some highly eulogistic remarks on a book which is scarcely known, even by name, to the present generation of readers; and, not content with describing it as one of the most singular productions in our language (which without a doubt it really is), this brilliant but paradoxical critic assures us that 'John Buncle is the English Rabelais.' Both Buncle and Rabelais, he contends, were enemies of too much gravity; both had 'the insolence of health'; the business of both was to enjoy life; and, if the one indulged his spirit of sensuality in wine, in dried neats' tongues, in Bologna sausages and botargos, the other showed precisely the same symptoms of inordinate satisfaction in tea and bread-and-butter; as Rabelais roared with Friar John and the monks, so Buncle gossipped with the ladies, with an equal and uncontrolled gaiety. Hazlitt's criticism of old authors is not usually very wide of the mark, and his praise especially is apt to be fine and felicitous; but in this case his comparison is, to say the least of it, peculiar. For the reader who, after much trouble and expense, has at length

succeeded in procuring a copy of this rare and curious work will find, to his surprise, that in the so-called English Rabelais there is not one gleam of humour from beginning to end! Notwithstanding the extraordinary exuberance of animal spirits which the author exhibits in a series of amorous adventures, his dominant mood is serious, and even fanatical, and he almost stifles his readers in an atmosphere of rancorous and inconclusive theological controversy. The oddity and absurdity, both of his adventures and his arguments, will, it is true, occasionally raise a smile; but the laugh is invariably against the author, and not with him. Our disappointment in this respect, however, is somewhat tempered by the discovery that, if we have not found an English Rabelais, we have, at any rate, been introduced to a literary curiosity of an absolutely unique character.

Hazlitt calls the book a Unitarian Romance; but it is too strange a medley to fall easily under any classification. It appears to be partly autobiographical, and partly fictitious; and the author states that his object in writing it was—'to serve the interests of truth, liberty, and religion, and to advance useful learning,' while, at the same time, vindicating his character from misrepresentation, and illustrating his previous book of *Memoirs*. The book may perhaps be regarded as a crude anticipation of our modern 'novel with a purpose.' The author's two pet aversions

appear to have been, celibacy and the orthodox Trinitarian theology; and *John Buncle* was evidently written with the dual purpose of glorifying marriage, and showing the reasonableness of Unitarianism. His previous work, the *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, notwithstanding that its dedication (with notes!) runs to sixteen pages, and that there are thirteen pages more devoted to an explanation of how and why the *Memoirs* were written, does not help us much toward an understanding either of *John Buncle* or its author. The latter originally set out, it appears, with the intention of writing the lives of no less than twenty 'illustrious' ladies (whose names are duly given), all of great beauty and extraordinary accomplishments, and all zealous Unitarians. But, as the life of only one occupies the whole of this thick octavo volume, we need not be greatly surprised that nothing more was ever heard of the remaining nineteen. Neither in these *Memoirs*, nor in *John Buncle*, however, did the author propose to limit himself to a biographical record; and the reader is informed that he may expect to find also 'a thousand inquiries into other subjects, curious or antiquarian, accounts of men, and things, and books, and philosophical observations.' Many years ago he had begun a work on *The Antient and Present State of Great Britain*; but a learned friend pointed out so many errors in it, that he undertook a further course of reading and travel, in

order to qualify himself for a thorough revision of this work, before venturing on publication. He then put together a large quarto volume, which he called a *Preliminary Discourse*; but this was unfortunately burnt while he was reading it in bed, and he narrowly escaped being burnt with it. The *Memoirs* and *John Buncle* we are therefore invited to regard as a sort of salvage from the destroyed *magnum opus*. We may be proportionately thankful for that merciful fire; but, at the same time, the salvage is certainly curious enough to justify an epitomised account of it, although few readers would be able to get through the whole of our author's three stout octavo volumes without weariness—and perhaps disgust.

The story of *John Buncle*, then, is, briefly, as follows. He was born in London, but carried over during his infancy to Ireland, where his father owned considerable estates. From the time he could spell, he became a lover of books; and, before he was twenty, he had read, with extraordinary pleasure, the works of several of the Fathers, and all the old romances—an exercise which he admits to have tinged his ideas with a combination of piety and extravagance. At the age of fifteen he was sent to the University, where he devoted the whole of his time to study. Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* was his favourite reading; and he also found algebra so congenial an occupation that he often sat at it all

night, without a notion of its being day until the shutters of his room were opened. Walking and music were his only recreations. One morning, during his last term, he went out, before the sun was up, with dog and gun, and, after having travelled over hill and dale, for five hours, without knowing whither he was going, or giving a single thought to his college, he not unnaturally began to feel extremely hungry. Looking around, he espied a mansion at no great distance, towards which he at once bent his steps. In a rotunda or temple in the garden of the house he saw a beautiful young lady, engaged in writing, and occasionally glancing up with a pair of wonderful eyes at a Hebrew Bible. On seeing a visitor, she came to the window, and at the same moment her father, a venerable and genial old man, walked up from another part of the grounds. Buncle explained that he had lost his way, and was famished. On this hint, the old gentleman at once conducted him into the house, where the daughter speedily provided him with tea, 'and plenty of fine cream, and extraordinary bread-and-butter.' The young lady spoke so well, and looked so lovely, that Buncle was scarcely less charmed with her mind than he was lost in admiration of her person. He managed to prolong their talk till noon, when, to his joy, the old father reappeared, and insisted that he should stay to dinner, requesting his daughter to entertain the visitor meanwhile. As soon as Buncle

was again left alone with Miss Noel, he told her ingenuously that although he could not be certain whether he was in love with her, as he had never experienced the passion before, yet he felt very strange emotions within him, and was sure that he could never be happy without her. This was a little sudden; and Miss Noel begged that she might hear no more on that subject. She would rather, she said, hear his views on the 'primævity' of the Hebrew language. Thus challenged, Buncle proceeded to give, at some length, his reasons for thinking that Biblical Hebrew was the language of Paradise, and that it continued to be spoken by all men until long after the time of Moses. But, to his great surprise, Miss Noel at once controverted this (at equal or even greater length), and, finding all his arguments hopelessly confounded, the young man cried—

> 'Illuminate me, thou glorious girl, in this dark article, and be my teacher in Hebrew learning, as I flatter myself you will be my guide and dirigent of all my notions and my days. Yes, charming Hariot, my fate is in your hands. Dispose of it as you will, and make me what you please.'

Buncle, it will be observed, had none of the embarrassing bashfulness of the ordinary youth, inexperienced in affairs of the heart; but, as we shall see later on, he was to the manner born. Miss Noel smiled, said he was an odd compound of a man, but forbade him to let her hear any more of such romantic flights.

She then, by way of diverting his attention, took him to see her grotto, and they stayed admiring its beauties until they were summoned to dinner. After dinner, Mr. Noel, who was over eighty years of age, retired for his evening nap, charging his daughter to make tea for the visitor, whom he had invited to stay the night. Buncle declares that he was as happy over that pot of tea 'as ever with his Statira sat the conqueror of the world.'

'Charming angel! [he burst out] the beauties of your mind have inspired me with a passion that must increase every time that I behold the harmony of your face; and by the powers divine I swear to love you so long as Heaven shall permit me to breathe the vital air. Bid me, then, either live or die, and while I do live, be assured that my life shall be devoted to you only.'

But in vain was all this warmth; for Miss Noel quietly replied that, if he did not talk about something more rational, she must leave the room. 'If you please, then, Madam,' said he at once, 'we will consider the miracle at Babel.' He then owned to being himself of the opinion of Hutchinson on this matter; but Miss Noel summarily confuted poor Hutchinson's theory (the argument occupying some ten pages) with a highly curious and unexpected result. So amazed was I, says Buncle, at so high a degree of intelligence in a female that 'I could not help snatching this beauty to my arms, and without thinking of what

I did, impressed on her balmy mouth half a dozen kisses.' His impetuosity seems to have given some offence; and he admits that it was wrong. But when he had begged her pardon, and assured her that the magic of her glorious eyes, added to the bright powers of her mind, had transported him beside himself, she was easily reconciled, and proposed a game at cribbage. Then, seeing the head of his German flute sticking out of his pocket, she asked him to oblige her with a song instead. Of course he readily complied, and proceeded to play one of his own composing; the old father, who had now finished his nap, arriving in time to hear the finish of it, and demanding another. The music so pleased the old gentleman, that he invited Buncle to stay a month if he liked, and to come again as often, and stay as long, as he pleased. After all this, the reader will not be surprised to find that, before many weeks had expired, Buncle was engaged to the lovely Hariot, who was to bring with her a large fortune in ready cash, and be made her father's heir. But there 's many a slip between cup and lip, and, just a fortnight before the day fixed for their wedding, Miss Noel died of the small-pox. For the space of two months the bereaved lover scarcely spoke; then he resolved to go home to his father, whom he had not seen for five years. But at home further trouble was in store for him. His father had recently married a young

wife, who proved to be antagonistic to her stepson; and the father himself was so enraged when the son (having, since he left home, become a Unitarian) refused to read the orthodox prayers at family worship, that young Buncle was promptly disinherited, and turned out of house and home.

Having nothing on which to start in the world but a vigorous constitution, a purse full of gold, and a £500 bank-note which Miss Noel had left him by will the day she sickened, young Buncle put his trust in Providence, and took ship for England. And Providence almost immediately afforded him the opportunity of saving the life of a young lady, a fellow-passenger on board the ship. On landing at Whitehaven, he and this young lady, Miss Melmoth, put up at the same inn, and for the following three weeks breakfasted, dined, and supped together. Miss Melmoth was fluent in Latin and Greek, and they talked together 'like two critics, or two grammarians, antiquarians, historians, or philosophers,' but (a circumstance which he notes as 'very odd') during the whole of that time there was not one look of love between them. At the end of the three weeks, they travelled together to a point where their roads diverged; she and her servants being bound for Yorkshire, while he was bent on seeking out an old University chum, named Turner, who dwelt somewhere in the wilds of Westmoreland. Before they parted, however, Miss

Melmoth burst into tears; and on his inquiring for the cause, she told him her grief was caused by the thought that she might never see him, the gallant preserver of her life, any more. Buncle, as we shall see, did not usually wait for a hint from any lady; but he declares that it was then that, for the first time, he kissed Miss Melmoth, promising to travel on to her house in Yorkshire as soon as he had paid his respects to his friend Turner. After parting with this charming travelling companion, Buncle entered into 'a vast valley, enclosed by mountains whose tops were above the clouds, and soon came into a country that is wilder than the Campagna of Rome, or the uncultivated vales of the Alps and Apennines.' His love of the country, and especially his admiration for wild scenery, is in striking contrast with the indifference shown by most contemporary authors. Dr. Johnson, for instance, made his celebrated tour to the Hebrides in 1763, and he, as we know, declared that a blade of grass was always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another, and that, wherever a traveller might be, the proper study of mankind was Man. Buncle, on the other hand, seems to have been of opinion that the proper study of mankind was Woman; and he liked to picture her (and, what is more remarkable, was perpetually finding her) immersed in the study of theology and mathematics, against a background of wild and wonderful woodland scenery. His

descriptions of the country he passes through are always extravagant; but again and again he goes into raptures as he traverses the beautiful country about the fells, riding by the shores of lovely lakes or along the banks of bright running streams, and seeing neither house nor man for eight hours or more at a time. It is characteristic of him, however, that always before nightfall he lights upon some well-placed mansion or sweetly situated cottage, whose owner, whether total stranger or former friend (and it is really astonishing what a number of long-lost friends he thus finds in unexpected places), receives him with delight, promptly places before him a fowl with bacon and greens, or a pound of rump steak and a quart of green peas, together with strong ale and port wine, entertains him likewise with a lengthy discourse on the principles of true Christianity (*i.e.* of course, Unitarianism), and invites him to stay a week, or a month, or as long as he likes.

The first house Buncle sees, at the end of his first day's journey after leaving Miss Melmoth, turns out to be the habitation of an old friend, named Jack Price, who is now married and settled, as he declares, with a wife who 'makes it the sole study and pleasure of her life to crown me every day with the highest satisfactions and comforts.' Jack had formerly been a terrible debauchee; but his Martha had converted him into a 'reasonable Christian,' or, in other words,

an enthusiastic Unitarian. 'I shall never forget the lesson,' he confides to Buncle; 'the substance of what she said is as follows'—and then we get a regulation sermon. By and by, Mrs. Price is introduced, and she and her visitor immediately plunge into a conversation on primitive Christianity; the lady having first innings in an argument which takes up eleven pages of the book, and Buncle following on, and victoriously scoring point after point against the orthodox professors of theology, for forty-seven pages more. After a short stay with these estimable friends, Buncle proceeds on his journey, and, having passed through a country whose wild scenery 'harrowed the soul with horror,' he arrived at a place named Burcott Lodge, where he finds a sort of female republic of one hundred souls, presided over by a young paragon whom he calls Azora. This lady, unlike most of those whom Buncle meets on his travels, was not particularly learned; she understood English only, and had but few books; but he found that she could instruct him in his favourite algebra, while on the fundamental points of religion he admits that he was not only out-talked but out-reasoned. And she gave him other valuable instruction as well; for he declares that, if he had set down all that she told him about salads, cucumbers, early cabbages, strawberries, etc., it would have made an octavo volume. Azora founded her female community (which strikes one as a grotesque

anticipation of the idea of Tennyson's *Princess*) when her father and all the men of the neighbourhood were swept off by a fever. She had a bodyguard of ten maidens, specially educated in fine needlework, in music, and in mathematics. Buncle, always proud of his head for figures, set these girls a few sums, all of which they did according to improved methods, with surprising quickness; while Azora and her lieutenant, Antonina, speedily showed him that in the higher mathematics they could give him points and beat him easily. Whereupon he observes: 'My whole life has been spent in reading and thinking; and nevertheless I have met with many women in my time who, with very little reading, have been too hard for me on several subjects'; and he concludes that—

'if they had the laboured education the men have, and applied to books with all possible attention for as many years as we do, there would be found among them as great divines as Episcopius, Limborch, Whichcote, Barrow, Tillotson, and Clarke, and as great mathematicians as Maclaurin, Saunderson, and Simpson.'

Some of Buncle's illustrations are a trifle fantastic; but the idea of woman's sphere and mission floating in his mind seems to have been substantially that which we now associate with the name of John Stuart Mill. This female republic, however, was not altogether a thing after Buncle's heart; and he takes care

to tell us in a note that, soon after Azora's death, her lieutenant, Antonina, advised the young women to marry some stalwart young men from the neighbouring mountains, so as to increase the number of her people. And, says Buncle, many advantages were found from the presence of men amongst them; the most notable apparently being that 'more than half the women who married had twins the first year!'

In the early part of the eighteenth century, the English Lake District was very little visited; and an adventurous traveller might have allowed considerable licence to his imagination, without much chance of being found out. But it is difficult to believe that the veriest Cockney can ever have been taken in by some of Buncle's extraordinary relations. He has no sooner left the female republic just described than, in one of the numerous happy valleys lying among the hills, which he always represents as Alps, he comes suddenly upon a pretty hermitage which, on entering, he discovers to be inhabited by a solitary skeleton, with its bones picked as clean and white as if from the hands of a surgeon. On a table lies a box, and in the box he finds a paper telling the skeleton's story. His name was John Orton, and this history states him to have been, up to the age of forty, a licentious and abandoned wretch. But he then had a fever, which caused him to sell all his worldly goods and retire to these mountains, where he cultivated his garden, studied

his Bible, and piously meditated on his latter end. While Buncle soliloquises over the skeleton, his two boys bring in a wild turkey which they have meantime caught and roasted; so our cheerful philosopher is enabled to sit down to an excellent supper before burying John Orton's bones, making a careful inventory of all the goods in the house, and resolving to settle down in the place, and end his life of adventures. But he soon pines for livelier company than the skull of John Orton, which he has kept for a *memento mori*; and it occurs to him that Miss Melmoth's presence would give the place much more the air of an Earthly Paradise. Moreover, he has not yet succeeded in finding his old college chum, Turner. So he mounts to horse once more, and, after one or two other adventures, which may be passed over, tumbles suddenly through a hole or tunnel in one of those mysterious mountains, plump into a secluded valley which he might never have otherwise discovered; and there, before his eyes, stands the house of his friend. Turner is away in Italy, but Buncle is cordially welcomed by a beautiful young sister of his friend, who, besides being well acquainted with antiquity, history, and geography, has £50,000 at her own disposal; and the now experienced eye of the visitor soon detects that she is very favourably inclined towards him. Being, however, as he assures us, a man of punctilious honour, he could not permit him-

self to ask her hand in her brother's absence; so, after a few days' stay, he continues his journey towards the home of Miss Melmoth. On arriving at the address she had given him, however, he finds, to his dismay, that the lady of the house has recently died, and that Miss Melmoth, who inherited all her property, has sold it off and gone away. She had left behind her a letter for a gentleman who was expected to call, (presumably himself); but this the caretaker has unfortunately lost. He frantically scours the neighbouring country in search of her for the following three weeks, but, meeting with no success, is just on the point of abandoning the quest, when, as he is one evening standing disconsolately at an inn door waiting for his supper, the lady herself rides up to him. She had heard of his call and the loss of her letter, and for three weeks they had been playing hide-and-seek with one another all over the country. There is never any beating about the bush with Buncle; whether in love or theology, he goes directly for his object like a bull at a gate. So he promptly gives Miss Melmoth what he candidly admits was a rather flowery description of Orton Lodge, and asks if she is willing to share his solitude there. The lady is as downright as the gentleman, and, without hesitation, declares that she would be ready to go with him to Hudson's Bay, while, if she had a hundred thousand pounds, they should be as entirely at his service as is the moderate

fortune of four thousand and a little personal estate, which is all she has to offer.

'Give me thy hand, then (I said), thou generous girl. You have made me the happiest of men, and in return I swear by that *one, supreme, tremendous Power* I adore, that I will be true and faithful to thee till death dissolves the sacred obligation. Twice do I swear by the *Great Spirit* in whose dread presence I am, with your right hand locked fast in mine across this table, and call on him as witness to our vows, that neither time, nor chance, nor aught but death's inevitable hand shall e'er divide our loves. Miss Melmoth said: *Amen.*'

Forthwith they mounted their horses and galloped off to Orton Lodge, where the best things the house afforded were set on the table, a Roman Catholic Priest of the neighbourhood, whose acquaintance Buncle had already made, was quickly called in to perform the marriage ceremony, and 'man and wife we sat down to supper.' Two years, full of delight, were passed with his Charlotte at Orton Lodge; and then she died, during an epidemic of fever which devastated the district. He describes himself as overwhelmed with sorrow, 'like a traveller in Greenland who has lost the sun'; but this dejection was of short duration, and within a little while he sold off his live stock, locked up the house, and set off on horseback, accompanied by one manservant, not, like the Knight of La Mancha, in hopes of conquering a kingdom and winning a princess, but with this more prosaic, though more attainable object, viz. 'to see if I could find

another good country girl for a wife, and get a little more money; as these were the only two things united that would save me from melancholy, and secure real happiness.' He had not far to seek. Before the end of the first day, he had arrived at a handsome square house, set in a beautiful garden; and, finding nobody to oppose his entrance, he marched straight into a fine spacious room, filled on every side with books, globes, telescopes, etc., where, in a chair, sat a silver-haired old gentleman, nearly a hundred years of age, with a beautiful grand-daughter beside him. In the middle of the room was a reading-desk, on which leaned the skeleton of a man, with an inscription attached, which informed the casual visitor that 'This skeleton was once Charles Henley, Esquire.' The silver-haired old gentleman politely welcomed Buncle, who, being now familiar with skeletons, forbore to ask any questions, and volunteered his own history instead. Next morning, however, he learns the story of the old gentleman's family, including that of the obtrusive family skeleton. The young lady, it appears, is the skeleton's daughter; and her learning and accomplishments are as great as her beauty. Her father has left her his house and estate, together with £10,000 a year; but she is not to inherit or to marry before she is twenty-two years of age; and, meanwhile, the skeleton is always to stand in the middle of the room as a *memento mori*. Statia, says her amiable grandfather, is now only in the second month of her

twenty-first year; but if Buncle will be good enough to stay with them until her twenty-second birthday, he shall then marry her. Buncle, like Barkis, is always willing, and agrees to stay the time; though when, seven months afterwards, the old gentleman dies, he proposes as an amendment that they should marry at once. But, to his consternation, the young lady now declares that she is more inclined towards a life of celibacy; and that, as her guardian is no longer with them, it is improper for Buncle to remain in the house. This was an altogether unexpected and staggering development; but our matrimonial philosopher was equal to the occasion, and, collecting all his eloquence, delivered a discourse of such power on the duty of all good Christians to increase and multiply, so as to provide a succession of generations to share in the honours and privileges of the true Church, that the convinced Statia capitulated on the spot. Father Fleming was instantly sent for, and they were promptly married, in spite of the provisions of the skeleton's will. Orton Lodge was decided upon for their honeymoon, and they liked the place so well, that they remained there for two years; at the end of which time another epidemic carried Statia off, and Buncle laid her by the side of Charlotte. 'I sat with my eyes shut for three days,' he solemnly relates, 'but at last called for my horse, to try what air, exercise, and a variety of objects could do.'

On the road towards Harrogate, at which place he proposes to take the waters, Buncle pays a passing visit to a society of married friars, and gives it as his opinion that 'it is really a fine thing to monk it on *this* plan.' They are Socinian friars, of course; and he treats the reader to forty-six pages concerning their way of life and their theology. Then, proceeding on his journey, he loses his way. After a time, we get to know that, whenever Buncle loses his way, something astonishing or delightful is about to happen. In this instance, he discovers the prettiest little house he ever beheld, and, getting no answer to repeated knocks for admission, roams about the grounds until, finding 'a sleeping parlour similar to that in the gardens at Stowe,' he makes himself comfortable there for the night. Next day he learns that the house belongs to a young lady of great fortune, Miss Cranmer, whose father has been dead about a year, and who is now away from home for a short time. As might be expected of him, he puts up at a neighbouring cottage to wait for this lady's return. To fill up his time in the interval, he goes to visit a hermit who lives a few miles off; and, as a consequence, the reader, as well as this unfortunate man, is treated to more than twenty pages of objections to the theological doctrines of Bellarmine and Le Blanc. Miss Cranmer, on her return three weeks later, proved to be 'as pretty as it was possible for flesh and blood to be'; and 'as she

had very little notion of men, having seen very few except the two old servants who lived with her,' our amorous widower induced her to marry him before the expiration of another six weeks. She was as good as an angel, he declares, and they lived together at Orton Lodge 'in unspeakable felicity' until, at the end of two years, she also was carried off by that inevitable epidemic, and had to be laid by the side of Charlotte and Statia. On the occasion of this third bereavement, he sat with his eyes closed for four days, and then, as before, mounted his horse and set out for Harrogate. At this point of the story, it suddenly occurs to him that some readers may wonder that no mention has been made of any children by so many wives; and he therefore explains, once for all, that, though he has a great many to carry on the succession, they have, so far, done nothing but 'rise and breakfast, read and saunter, drink and eat,' and therefore it would not be fair to make anybody pay for their history. During this visit to his favourite Harrogate, he renews acquaintanceship with six Irish gentlemen whom he had formerly known in Dublin. They were all men of large fortunes, and as handsome fine fellows as could be picked out in all the world; but, although he favours us with a character-sketch of each, we must content ourselves here with a few words concerning the most remarkable of the group. This was a Mr. Gallaspy, who was the tallest and

strongest man Buncle had ever seen; who never went to bed more often than one night in three, was the most profane swearer ever known, had already killed two men in duels, and, in addition to certain other accomplishments, which Buncle particularises, but which our more modest age will not allow to be mentioned in print, always smoked two pipes at once, one in each corner of his mouth, and blew the smoke of both out of his nostrils, and was also in the habit of drinking 'seven in a hand,' that is to say, 'seven glasses so placed between the fingers of his right hand that, in drinking, the liquor fell into the next glass, and thereby he drank out of the first glass seven glasses at once.' This episode is the only instance throughout the book of the specifically Rabelaisian type of extravagance; and the quality of it is hardly such as to make us wish for more.

But it was not only Irishmen that Buncle met at Harrogate. He had only been there a day or two, when it was his fortune to dance with Miss Spence, of Westmoreland, a lady 'who had the *head* of Aristotle, the *heart* of a primitive Christian, and the *form* of the Venus de Medicis'; and the reader will be by no means surprised to hear that he was not many hours in her company before he was passionately in love with her. But he anticipates that perhaps some conventionally-minded persons may not heartily agree with his plighting his vows to a fourth girl when the three wives he has already buried are scarcely cold

in their graves; so he thinks it well to set out at length his apology for marrying so often.

'I think it unreasonable and impious to grieve immoderately for the dead. A decent and proper tribute of tears and sorrow humanity requires; but when that duty has been paid, we must remember that to lament a dead woman is not to lament a wife. A wife must be a living woman. The wife we lose by death is no more than a sad and empty object, formed by the imagination; and to be still devoted to her is to be in love with an idea. It is a mere chimerical passion, as the deceased has no more to do with this world than if she had existed before the Flood. As we cannot restore what Nature has destroyed, it is foolish to be faithful to affliction. Nor is this all. If the woman we marry has the seven qualifications which every man would wish to find in a wife,—beauty, discretion, sweetness of temper, a sprightly wit, fertility, wealth, and noble extraction,—yet death's snatching so amiable a wife from our arms can be no reason for accusing fate of cruelty, that is, Providence of injustice; nor can it authorise us to sink into insensibility, and neglect the duty and business of life. This wife was born to die; and we receive her under the condition of mortality . . . and when this term is expired . . . we should look out for another with the seven qualifications, as it is not good for man to be alone, and as he is by the Abrahamic covenant bound to carry on the succession, in a regular way, if it be in his power.'

There is more, to the same effect, on the general question, and then follows a special application to his own particular case:—

'As I had forfeited my father's favour and estate for the sake of Christian Deism, and had nothing but my own honest industry to secure me daily bread, it was necessary for me to

lay hold of every opportunity to improve my fortune, and, of consequence, do my best to gain the heart of the first rich young woman who came in my way after I had buried a wife. It was not for me to be snivelling for months because my wife died before me, which was, at least, as probable as that she should be the survivor.'

Any comment on this callous and fantastic, but apparently perfectly serious, apology being surely superfluous, we hasten on with the story. Miss Spence promises to consider Buncle's proposal, and give him an answer later on at her home in Westmoreland. In the interval, he employs himself in rescuing two young and beautiful heiresses—one aged nineteen and the other twenty, and each entitled to £100,000 on coming of age—from the moated house in which their rascally guardian is keeping them immured. But, as he would not risk marrying one of them (even were Miss Spence out of the question) in case she might die before inheriting her money, he takes them both to Orton Lodge, and leaves them there while he posts off to get his answer from the Lady with the head of Aristotle and the form of Venus de Medicis. Miss Spence was of the age of twenty-four, she possessed a neat and pretty mansion standing in about two hundred acres of charming grounds, and she was one of several ladies Buncle met with in the course of his travels who understood 'the arithmetic of fluxions.' It may, perhaps, go without the saying, that she was also a 'Christian Deist.' On his arrival at her 'neat and

pretty mansion,' she is just on the point of starting on a journey to London, accompanied by a maid and a footman, on horseback, and is glad to avail herself of her admirer's escort. By the way, they discuss Leibnitz and Newton, and fluxions; and the reader has the benefit of nearly twenty pages of their conversation, the report of which by no means bears out Buncle's reference to the head of Aristotle. What they saw or did while in London, he unfortunately omits to tell us. He briefly says that, within three weeks of their arrival, they were married; and then, with equal brevity, that before the end of six months she was dead; and that, though he mourned her loss 'with a degree of sorrow due to so much excellence, endearment, and delight,' yet he soon went out into the world again, to relieve his mind, and try his fortune once more. Three months later, Miss Turner, the beautiful sister of his old college chum, and the mistress, as we have seen, of £50,000, rides up to the inn in which Buncle happens to be staying; and, as soon as he hears that her brother is no more, he proposes to her on the spot. She agrees to give him her answer in the course of a few days; but, while playing cards in the evening, it becomes evident to the penetrating eye of this past master of proposals, that she is already all his own; so without waiting for her formal answer, he at once sends his man off for Father Fleming, and they are married on the following morning. It is but three short months since

the death of wife number four; but 'a dead woman is no wife,' he exclaims, 'and marriage is ever glorious!' After spending six weeks at the inn were they were married, the happy couple set off for a visit to London; but they had proceeded a very little way on their journey, before their carriage was overturned by the side of a steep hill, and his fifth charmer was killed. 'It was in vain for me to continue lamenting,' he simply remarks, 'she is gone for ever'; so 'her body I deposited in the next churchyard, and immediately after rid as fast as I could up to London.'

On his visit to the great city, he took lodgings in the house of Edmund Curll, the bookseller, a man who is more or less familiar to us from Pope's references to him in the *Dunciad* and elsewhere. Buncle's sketch of this notorious character is by no means flattering. 'Curll was in person,' he says, 'very tall and thin, an ungainly, awkward, white-faced man. His eyes were a light grey, large, projecting, goggle, and purblind. He was splay-footed and baker-kneed.' No man could talk so well on theatrical subjects and theology, we are told; but he printed lewd things and was altogether a lewd fellow, being too fond of drink when he could get it at other people's expense, and behaving so miserly to his staff of miserable Grub Street hacks, that 'his translators in pay lay, three in a bed, at the *Pewter Platter* in Holborn.' Curll introduced Buncle to some of the most infamous dens in London; and it

was at Curll's house that he met the two Irish sharpers, who inveigled him into a gambling-hell, and quickly fleeced him out of all the money which he had made by his various fortunate marriages. By way of making amends for this last crushing misfortune, however, the dissolute bookseller put him in the way of running off with the only daughter and heiress of an old and wealthy miser named Dunk. Agnes Dunk, of course, was a young and beautiful and cultivated girl, and she readily agreed to ride off with Buncle to Cumberland to be married. But, on the way, she fell ill of a fever and died; whereupon Buncle sadly put her into a coffin with his own hands, and, after keeping her seven days, according to the old Roman fashion, disconsolately followed her to her grave. And now comes one of the strangest experiences of even his strange life. For, six months later, being driven by stress of weather to take shelter in the house of a Dr. Stowell in Westmoreland, he is staggered to find that the doctor's wife is, without a doubt, no other than this very Miss Dunk, whom he had so carefully buried with his own hands. She does not appear to recognise him, so he discreetly says nothing; but he sets his servant to make inquiries, from which it appears that the doctor had been in the habit of having bodies brought to him from churchyards for purposes of dissection, and that, on one such occasion, just as he was about to use his knife, one of these bodies moved, and, on being

resuscitated, it turned out to be so charming a woman, that her preserver lost no time in marrying her. Before long, Buncle hears of another North-country medical man, named Fitzgibbon, who has an only daughter, 'a very divinity'; and, on paying him a visit, is invited to take up his quarters in the house for the purpose of studying physic. He does so; and, at the end of two years, marries the doctor's lovely daughter, Julia. Dr. Fitzgibbon dies a few weeks after his daughter's wedding, leaving Buncle not only his house, his library, and his practice, but a handsome fortune as well. Ten months after marriage, Julia fell into a river that flowed by the end of her garden, and was drowned. This time, Buncle sat with his eyes shut for the length of ten days; reflecting, he says, on the wisdom of God.

'And when I had done, I called to my man, Soto ô Fin, to bring the horses out immediately, and I would go somewhere or other to see new scenes, and, if I could, get another wife. . . . What man could say he had had enough of wedlock because he had buried seven such wives? I am sure I could not.'

With this notion in his head he determined to make for Orton Lodge, reflecting that one of the two young heiresses he had left in possession there would now be just about of legal age. But, on arrival, he found the place shut up, and a note fastened to the door-key, informing him that, having heard nothing of

him for so long, and learning that their nefarious guardian was now dead, the young ladies had felt free to go away, — but whither he could not even guess. So he settles down for a month in his old home to cogitate; and then a desire comes upon him to 'look once more at that fair curiosity, Miss Dunk that was.' Mrs. Stowell makes no more sign of recognising him than on the occasion of his former visit; and he plunges into a spirited conversation with her husband on 'the wisdom and goodness of God in the production of the Spanish fly for the benefit of man'; but, after talking for a very short time, the good doctor dropped dead from his chair. What followed can only be told in his own words:—

'When the beautiful Mrs. Stowell saw her husband was really dead, and had paid that decent tribute to his memory which was due to a man who had left her in his will all his estate, real and personal, to be by her disposed of as she pleased, she sent for me to her chamber the next morning, and, after a long conversation with her, told me she could now own who she was, and, instead of acting any longer by the directions of her head, let me know from her heart that she still had the same regard for me as when we travelled away from her father's house.'

Of course Buncle was ready for another wedding at once; but the lady insisted on going away for three months, for propriety's sake. He remained in possession of the house and property in the meantime; and they were duly married a week after her return.

Just at this time he learns that his father is dying, and therefore selects Ireland for his seventh honeymoon. On arriving at the paternal mansion, which he has not seen or heard from since the days of his youth, he is astonished to find that the old gentleman has become as strict a Unitarian as himself; a circumstance which would have given him even more satisfaction than it did if, during his passion for orthodoxy, that stern parent had not alienated his estate, so that now he can leave his son nothing but £100 a year, a little ready money, and a small ship, a sloop of twenty-five tons, then lying at anchor in the bay. The father dies in all the odour of Unitarian sanctity, and Buncle, with Mrs. Buncle the seventh, soon returns to England in the family sloop. Whether the possession of a ship turned his thoughts from matrimony, or whether there were any other cause, he does not inform us. But when, a year later, 'Miss Dunk that was' left him again a widower, he circumnavigated the globe in this cockle-shell, and made it his habitation for nine years. After which he purchased 'a little flowery retreat' within a few miles of London, and there settled down, without (at any rate up to the moment of writing) any further matrimonial inclinations, and yet, he declares, as happy a mortal as can exist on this planet.

The *Life of John Buncle* purports to be an auto-

biography. Doubtless there are some few grains of fact in this bushel of fiction; but it would be scarcely worth while, even if it were possible, to pick them out; and all that is independently known of the author amounts to very little. In a letter to the *St. James's Chronicle* of 25th October 1788, a correspondent, who had been much struck with the singularities of *John Buncle*, inquired whether anybody knew anything concerning 'an author whose real name has been as studiously concealed from the world as that of the gentleman who wrote the celebrated letters signed *Junius*.' In answer to this, a few days later, another correspondent, signing himself 'X,' informed the public that the real name of the author of *John Buncle* was Amory, and that he had frequently seen, and occasionally exchanged a few words with, this 'very singular person,' whom he believed to be now dead. The letter goes on—

'I believe he was a native of Ireland; and I have been informed that he was bred to some Branch of the Profession of Physick. Whether he ever followed that, or any other profession, I have not heard. When I knew him, he lived in a very recluse Way, on a small Fortune; and his residence was in Orchard Street, Westminster. At that time he had a Country Lodging for occasional Retirement, in the Summer, at Belfound [Bedfont], near Hounslow. This was about 30 years ago. He had then a Wife, who bore a very respectable Character; and by whom he had a Son, who, if living, is a Physician somewhere in the North of England.'

'X' appeals to this son to favour the public with a more satisfactory account of his 'learned though very eccentric Father,' who was, he goes on to say—

'a Man of a very peculiar Look and Aspect; though at the same Time he bore quite the Appearance of a Gentleman. He read much; and scarce ever stirred, but like a Bat, in the Dark of the Evening: and then he would take his usual Walk; but seemed to be always ruminating on speculative Subjects, even while passing along the most crowded streets.'

He further declares, that Amory was a zealous Unitarian 'to a most Romantick Degree,' and that it was generally thought that, in the character and adventures of Mr. Buncle, he intended 'at least a sketch of his own Picture,' 'X' venturing his own opinion that 'perhaps the general outline is not unlike.' This communication speedily drew a reply from Amory's son; which is not very illuminating, but which, as an epistolary curiosity, may be given *in extenso*.

'In your paper of the 6th of this Month I found some very erroneous statements of my Father (John Buncle), Thomas Amory, Esq. He was not a native of Ireland. His Father, Councillor Amory, attended King William to Ireland, and was appointed Secretary for the forfeited Estates in that Kingdom, and was possessed of very extensive property in the County of Clare. He was the youngest Brother of Amory or Damer, the Miser, whom Pope calls "the Wealthy and the Wise"; from whom comes Lord Milton, etc., etc. My grandfather married the Daughter of

FitzMaurice, Earl of Kerry; Sir William Petty another Daughter; and the grandfather of the Duke of Leinster another. My father lived on Millbank, Westminster, and for a few Years rented a house at Bellfont. He never had but one Wife, and I am the only surviving Child; he is yet living, and is now 97 Years old, and when young was a very handsome Man. He has published many political and religious Tracts, Poems, and Songs. I cannot comprehend any Sense in your calling him an "Unitarian to a romantic degree." He worships one God through the Mediation of Jesus Christ. I cannot see any Romance in that. He will not see any Company, nor ever comes out of his Room.—I remain, Sir, Your humble Servant,

ROBERT AMORY, M.D.

'WAKEFIELD, *Nov.* 19, 1788.

'*P.S.*—I have practised Physic here 27 years. We are lineally descended from Amory de Montford, who married the sister of Henry II., and was created Earl of Leicester. I have three sons, all in the army. My eldest son, Robert, is a miserable Cripple, from an Injury received in the Action under Lord Rodney on the 12th of April; my second Son is a lieutenant in the 71st, and my third an Ensign in the 57th.'

In January 1789, a Mr. Louis Renas, writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* gave reasons for doubting Dr. Amory's genealogy; whereupon the irate doctor wrote to 'Mr. Urban,' that his account was taken from his grandfather's papers, and had been confirmed by his father; that the Ignorance and Low Abuse of Renas were beneath contempt, and that this person 'should sign his name *Mr. Louis the Ass,*

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and then the Herald's Office might easily have found out *his* connections.' In this letter he incidentally mentions that his aged father had died in November of the previous year; but the correspondence is chiefly interesting as showing that Dr. Amory, though without any of his father's literary faculty, at any rate 'carried on the succession' in respect of eccentricity. Buncle desired to be remembered as 'an odd man'; and, so far as Amory is remembered at all, it will only be as an odd writer. His books have not even the interest of marking any transition stage in the evolution of the English novel; for Richardson's *Pamela, Clarissa,* and *Sir Charles Grandison,* Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones,* and Smollett's *Roderick Random* had all appeared before the *Memoirs* and *John Buncle.* In neither book is there either plot, or analysis of motives, or delineation of feelings, or discrimination of character. A large proportion of Buncle's adventures are as preposterous as those of Baron Munchausen; and as for the philosophical, scientific, and theological dissertations with which these are interspersed, all that need be said of them is, that they are not above the level of a Sunday orator in Hyde Park. Some books, says the wise Bacon, may be read by deputy; and in this class we may unhesitatingly place Amory's *Memoirs* of 'illustrious' ladies, and the *Life of John Buncle.*

THOMAS DAY.

From a print in the British Museum.

THE AUTHOR OF 'SANDFORD AND MERTON.'

THE present generation of children are not so familiar with *The History of Sandford and Merton* as were their grandfathers and grandmothers. And even the latter, though they may have some hazy recollection of the judicious instruction which good Mr. Barlow imparted to his two pupils, and of the very excellent stories with which he enlivened his moral discourses, have probably no idea whatever of the curious personality of the remarkable author of this once popular children's book. Unfortunately, the authorised biography of Thomas Day, which appeared in 1805, in spite of certain undeniable merits, was a rather dull performance; but its subject was so singular a specimen of ultra-individualistic humanity, that it may be worth while to tell his story anew. Mr. James Keir, an old army captain turned scientist, who was deputed to write Day's *Life*, had his own notions of the duties of a biographer. He appears to have had some unaccountable objection to Dr. Johnson's methods, as exhibited in that incomparable gallery of half-length portraits, the *Lives of the Most Eminent*

English Poets; and even went so far as to declare that Johnson had been rightly punished for such a lamentable performance, by the way in which his own biographers had treated him. Keir's consequent determination not to display any of the 'follies and weaknesses (real or supposed)' of his hero, resulted in the suppression, among other things, of all details concerning Day's curious matrimonial experiments, which not only make a good story of themselves, but are absolutely essential to a right understanding of his life and character. Fortunately, however, all of Day's friends were not of the same way of thinking; and Keir's somewhat abstract, though eloquent, eulogium of the character of his friend in his public aspects, may be supplemented by many piquant details of his private and domestic history, which have been recorded in the *Memoirs* of his own life by Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and by Miss Annie Seward in her *Life* of Dr. Erasmus Darwin. 'The Swan of Lichfield,' as Miss Seward was called, expressly tells us that she 'would deem it inexcusable to introduce anything fabulous; to embellish truth by the slightest colouring of fiction'; but it may be well to remember, that many inaccuracies in her *Life* of the elder Darwin have been pointed out by the author of the *Origin of Species*, and that, in spite of her disclaimer, she may be justly suspected of a constitutional tendency towards 'exaggerating singularities,' and

'heightening what is extraordinary.' In most points, however, we are able to check her statements by a more trustworthy authority. Edgeworth's *Memoirs* were edited, and some details added to them, by his more famous daughter, Maria; and there is no reason to impeach their substantial accuracy.

Thomas Day was born in Wellclose Square, London, on June 22, 1748. Of his father nothing more is known than that he was a Collector of Customs, and that, when he died suddenly in July 1749, he left an estate at Bear Hill, near Wargrave in Berkshire, valued at £1200 a year, to his infant son, charging it with an annuity of £300 to the child's mother. Mrs. Day, on account of the delicate health of her son, removed to the more salubrious neighbourhood of Stoke Newington; but, before the boy was more than seven years old, she became the wife of another officer of Customs, named Thomas Phillips. The stepfather behaved more or less unkindly, as stepfathers not infrequently do. In after years, Day described him as 'one of those characters who seek to supply their inherent want of consequence by a busy, teasing interference in circumstances with which they have no concern.' Nevertheless, one of Day's first acts, on coming of age, was to raise his mother's jointure to £400 a year, and to settle this sum on his disagreeable stepfather for life. The mother seems to have been a woman of much strength of mind

and character, who devoted great care to the education of her only son. He was first sent to school at the Charterhouse, and then, in his sixteenth year, to Corpus Christi, Oxford. He resided at Oxford three years, and left without taking a degree. But 'plain living and high thinking' appears to have been his motto; and he certainly studied philosophy, after a fashion of his own, to such purpose that, in spite of passion, ambition, and the ridicule of others, he adhered throughout the whole of his life, with extraordinary consistency, to the Stoic principles imbibed during this period of his youth. Keir says that the character of Tommy Sandford is a transcript of the author's own mind in his younger days. On one occasion he saved the life of William Seward, a schoolfellow, at the risk of his own; and on another, discovering that his antagonist in a schoolboy fight was no match for him, he at once stopped the fight, and offered to shake hands and be friends. Both Tommy Sandford and his prototype were undoubtedly inspired with a fine manly spirit; but there is also an unmistakable spice of the prig in both their constitutions. In his undergraduate time Day was a youth of great strength and activity, full of animal spirits, and not without humour. He was fond of taking walking tours through various parts of England and Wales; and on these occasions it was his habit to mix by preference with working people, because he believed

human nature might be better studied amongst the unconventional 'lower orders,' than amongst sophisticated fine ladies and gentlemen. Before leaving Oxford, he had made acquaintance with R. L. Edgeworth; and the latter, in his *Memoirs*, states that he counted this date as an era in his life. Day's exterior, says Edgeworth, was not at that time prepossessing, for 'he seldom combed his raven locks, though he was remarkably fond of washing in the stream.' The essential point of sympathy between them was a love of knowledge, and a freedom from 'that admiration of splendour which dazzles and enslaves mankind.' In other matters there was more of contrast than of resemblance. Day was melancholy, Edgeworth 'full of constitutional joy.' Day was not a man of strong passions; Edgeworth, by his own admission, was most emphatically so. Day was averse from, and even suspicious of, women; Edgeworth, on the other hand, was 'fond of all the happiness which they can bestow.' They became fast friends, however; and after Day's death Edgeworth declared that, during twenty-three years of the most perfect intimacy, he had never known his friend to swerve from the strictest morality in word or action, adding: 'It is but justice, and not the partiality of friendship, that induces me to assert, that Mr. Day was the most virtuous human being I have ever known.' When they first became acquainted, Edgeworth was already

a married man, with an infant son, whom he was bringing up according to the principles of Rousseau's *Émile*. Day soon became an ardent convert to these principles, and, as we shall see later on, put them into practice in an even more thorough fashion than did his comrade. In the spring of 1768, these two young friends, accompanied by Edgeworth's infant prodigy, started on a tour to Edgworthstown, in Ireland. They travelled at their ease in a patent phaeton of Edgeworth's invention; and, by way of amusing themselves on their journey, he informs us:—

'We agreed that Mr. Day should pass for a very *odd* gentleman, who was travelling about the world to overcome his sorrows for the loss of his wife; he was to be doatingly fond of his son, who was to be a most extraordinary child. We settled that I should pass for his servant and factotum; that, whilst I behaved with the utmost civility and attention towards my master, I should behind his back represent him as a humorist and a misanthropist; and that, while he appeared civil and easily pleased with common fare and ordinary attendance, I should give myself all possible airs.'

This simple and harmless hoax they determined to play on the good people of Eccleshall in Staffordshire. Their patent carriage was provided with a contrivance for letting off the horses instantaneously. Edgeworth drove rapidly up to the inn door, shouted vociferously for the ostler, disengaged his horses and conveyed them round the corner in a moment; and when the ostler appeared was seen, with his hat off,

lifting out his little master, and then holding his arm with grave deliberation for his great master to descend from the mysterious chariot, which appeared to have arrived without horses. He then ordered cold meat for the master and a tart for the child, after which he peremptorily desired to inspect the larder, and ordered for himself every delicacy the house contained. This was followed up by the performance of a number of gymnastic feats by the child on the phaeton outside; and, as young Edgeworth's usual costume was a jacket and trousers of strange and novel pattern, with no stockings and bare arms, it is small wonder that the curious population of Eccleshall soon collected round the inn in a crowd. The volatile Irishman amused the crowd till near dinner-time with an extravagant account of his master's misanthropy and strange adventures by sea and land; and was on the point of inventing further mystifications for the benefit of the landlady inside, when the whole of his ludicrous plans were completely upset by the unexpected arrival of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and the consequent revelation of the true identity of the erratic travellers.

Edgeworth's father and sister were at first repelled by Day's unconventional manners; but, before three months were over, he had become Miss Edgeworth's avowed admirer, and she had acknowledged that, if he were of the same mind a year hence, she might be induced to give him her hand. Before the summer

was over, he left Ireland to enter himself as a student of the Middle Temple, leaving Miss Edgeworth to study a course of works on metaphysics which he had recommended to her. But, before the winter of the same year, says the brother who had introduced them, they discovered that they were not suited to each other, 'a fact which all their friends had seen from the beginning of their acquaintance.' At a very early age Day appears to have conceived the notion of the possibility of raising the physical, intellectual, and moral status of posterity by the careful selection of proper partners in marriage—a doctrine which has recently been elaborated with more scientific precision by Mr. Francis Galton. During one of his walking tours in the West of England, he wrote a poem embodying his own ideal of a wife. She was to be simply neat, with none of the 'deceitful glare' of a town nymph, but with a healthy bloom on her cheeks, and lustrous eyes, which spoke the genuine feelings of her soul. She was, moreover, to be heedless of the praise or blame of all mankind, save only her husband. He imagines that some such appropriate partner is possibly to be found in that beautiful part of England, wherefore he sings:—

'Oh, gentle Lady of the West!
To find thee be my only task;
When found, I'll clasp thee to my breast:
No haughty birth or dower I ask.

Sequestered in some secret glade,
With thee unnoticed would I live;
And if Content adorn the shade,
What more can Heaven or Nature give?'

He had so great a contempt for dress, external appearances, and the usages of polite society generally, that he definitely resolved upon a life of simplicity and retirement, in which nothing was to be sacrificed to fashion and vanity, but much to benevolence. He was equally resolved on having a wife to share the simplicity and solitude with him; but ladies who love philosophy and despise dress and fashion were probably no more plentiful in Day's time than they are in our own. Whether any such lady was really discovered in the West does not appear; but we learn from Miss Seward, that, before the encounter with Miss Edgeworth, Day's mind had been wounded by the caprice of some unnamed young lady who 'claimed the triumph of a lettered heart,' without knowing how to value and retain her prize; and in her *Life* of Erasmus Darwin the sentimental Swan prints 'a beautiful elegy,' which Day composed on the occasion. He wanted a wife, she explains, 'with a taste for literature and science, for moral and patriotic philosophy'; and the lady was also required to be 'simple as a mountain girl, in her dress, her diet, and her manners; fearless and intrepid as the Spartan wives and Roman heroines.' His friend Edgeworth evidently

thought it somewhat unreasonable that 'a person neither formed by nature nor cultivated by art to please' should yet expect to win a wife who would feel for him the most romantic and everlasting attachment, and even be content to—

> 'Go clad like our maidens in grey,
> And live in a cottage on love.'

And Day himself seems at last to have admitted that he would be somewhat unlikely to find the ideal creature ready made. But he thought he would at least be able to mould one for himself; and he formed a plan which Edgeworth mildly characterises as 'more romantic than we find in novels.' He determined to breed up two young girls, under his own eye, strictly according to the principles which he had imbibed from Rousseau, with the view of making the most suitable one his wife as soon as she arrived at a marriageable age.

In accordance with this extraordinary plan, he went off, in company with a friend, a young barrister named Bicknell, to the Orphan Asylum at Shrewsbury, and there chose a young girl of promising appearance, whom Miss Seward describes as 'an auburn brunette,' and whom he named (after the river Severn and his favourite patriot) 'Sabrina Sidney.' A few days later, he paid a similar visit to the Foundling Hospital in London, and there chose another girl, with flaxen hair and light eyes, whom he named 'Lucretia.' For

form's sake, these girls were bound apprentice to Edgeworth, who was a married man; and Bicknell became guarantee that Day would apprentice one of them, with a premium of £100, within a year, to some reputable tradeswoman, and that he would educate the other with a view to her becoming his wife. If, however, he did *not* marry her, he undertook to pay for her support in some creditable family until she married some one else, when he would pay down a dowry of £500. The two girls were eleven and twelve years of age respectively, and Day began their education at once. Instead of bringing them up in England, he decided to take them to Avignon, partly to avoid the curiosity and inquiries of his acquaintance, and partly because, as the girls spoke nothing but English, he would be better assured that no one but himself would have any influence over their minds. He taught his young pupils to read and write; and, says Edgeworth, 'by reasoning which appeared to me to be above their comprehension, backed up by ridicule, he endeavoured to imbue them with a deep hatred for dress, for luxury, for fine people, for fashion, and for titles, all which inspired his own mind with such an unconquerable horror.' Miss Seward says that the girls quarrelled and fought incessantly, and gave poor Day a thoroughly bad time of it, to say nothing of taking the small-pox, through which he had to nurse them, and falling from a boat during tempestuous

weather into the Rhone, from which he had to rescue them at the risk of his own life. But in a letter which he wrote from Avignon in November 1769, there is a much more favourable account of them :—

'You enquire after my pupils [he says]. I am not disappointed in one respect. I am more attached to, and more convinced of, the truth of my principles than ever. . . . I have made them, in respect of temper, two such girls as, I may perhaps say without vanity, you have never seen at the same age. They have never given me a moment's trouble throughout the voyage, are always contented, and think nothing so agreeable as waiting upon me (no moderate convenience for a lazy man).'

And he transcribes the following letter from Miss Sabrina Sidney, which, he says, was dictated, word for word, by herself :—

'Dear Mr. Edgeworth,—I am glad to hear you are well, and your little boy—I love Mr. Day dearly, and Lucretia—I am learning to write—I do not like France so well as England —the people are very brown, they dress very oddly—the climate is very good here. I hope I shall have more sense against I come to England—I know how to make a circle and an equilateral triangle—I know the cause of day and night, winter and summer. I love Mr. Day best in the world, Mr. Bicknell next, and you next.'

All this, Day assures Edgeworth, he believes to be a faithful display of his little charge's heart and head. When, after eight months spent at Avignon, Day returned to England, Lucretia, who, according to Miss

Seward, was 'invincibly stupid,' was apprenticed to a milliner. It is satisfactory to know that she did well enough in that business, and ended by marrying a respectable linendraper. Sabrina, the favourite, was at this time a very pleasing girl of thirteen. Edgeworth says:—

'Her countenance was engaging. She had fine auburn hair, that hung in natural ringlets on her neck: a beauty which was the more striking because other people then wore enormous quantities of powder and pomatum. Her long eye-lashes, and eyes expressive of sweetness, interested all who saw her; and the uncommon melody of her voice made a favourable impression upon every person to whom she spoke.'

Day took a house in the little green valley of Stow, near Lichfield, and, as 'the Swan' expresses it, 'resumed his preparations for implanting in her young mind the characteristic virtues of Arria, Portia, and Cornelia.' When he came to Lichfield, in 1770, he was not more than twenty-two years of age; but 'the Swan' declares that he looked quite the philosopher. Powder and fine clothes were at that time the marks of a gentleman; but he wore neither. He was tall, full-bodied, though not corpulent, and deeply pitted by the small-pox. The curious mixture of awkwardness and dignity in his manners, his melancholy and meditative air, and his large hazel eyes, which, when he was excited to discussion, gleamed from beneath 'the shade of sable hair, which,

Adam-like, curled about his brows,' seem altogether to have made a strong impression, not only on the romantic Miss Seward, but also on the other members of that distinguished circle which revolved about Dr. Erasmus Darwin. They found him to be 'less graceful, less amusing, and less brilliant' than his friend Edgeworth, who settled there for a while about the same time, but 'more highly imaginative, more classical, and a deeper reasoner.' The Swan describes, with an enthusiasm which nowadays strikes one as highly comical, a portrait of the young philosopher, painted about this time by Wright, of Derby :—

'Drawn in the open air, the surrounding sky is tempestuous, lurid, and dark. He stands leaning his left arm against a column inscribed to Hampden. Mr. Day looks upward, as enthusiastically meditating on the contents of a book, held in his dropped right hand. The open leaf is the oration of that virtuous patriot in the senate against the grant of ship-money demanded by King Charles the First. A flash of lightning plays in Mr. Day's hair, and illuminates the contents of the volume.'

Sabrina appears to have been a general favourite with the ladies of Lichfield; but Day's method of cultivating her mind and heart did not have quite the success which he so confidently expected. Miss Seward tells us that the young lady's spirit could not be armed against the dread of pain or the apprehension of danger. 'When he dropped melting sealing-wax upon her arms she did not endure it

heroically; nor when he fired pistols at her petticoats, which she believed to be charged with balls, could she help starting aside, or suppress her screams.' Her fidelity in keeping secrets was also tried in Day's balance and found wanting; and she, moreover, showed little or no inclination for the study of books or the rudiments of science. The Swan puts her finger upon what was undoubtedly the cause of Day's failure, namely, that he was unable to supply his pupil with any adequate motive to exertion in these matters. He had endeavoured to keep from her any knowledge of the value of money, the reputation of beauty, and the love of dress, it being altogether against his principles to encourage the usual motives of pecuniary reward, luxury, ambition, or vanity. Nevertheless, he steadily persisted in his experiments for a year; but at the end of that time, finding he had made no progress, he sent Sabrina to a boarding-school at Sutton Coldfield, and turned his affections towards a charming and cultivated young lady of the Lichfield coterie, named Honora Sneyd. Day was aware that Edgeworth, whose married life was not at that time a very happy one, though he was living at home with his wife, had also been deeply smitten with Honora's charms. He therefore wrote him a letter, stating his intentions, and enlarging on the absurdity of a married man encouraging a hopeless passion, but at the same time declaring that he would go no

further himself if his action were likely to divide him from his chosen friend. Edgeworth's reply to this Quixotic epistle was to post off to Lichfield to make personal protestation that he would view his friend's union with Honora, not only with pleasure, but with exultation. Being thus conveniently on the spot, he was employed to deliver Day's formal proposal of marriage, which appears to have been in the form of an essay on matrimony of sufficient length to make a bulky packet. Honora, after controverting at length the views of the rights of man set forth in this proposal, and giving in return her views of the rights of woman, admitted that she admired the young philosopher's talents and revered his virtues, but plainly said that she could not love him, and that she firmly declined to change her present mode of life, with which she was by no means dissatisfied, for the dark and untried system of seclusion from society and unbounded marital control which Mr. Day had been good enough to propose to her. This disappointment, says Edgeworth, made Day ill for a short time; but Dr. Darwin bled him, and he soon recovered. Just at this point Honora's less intellectually distinguished, but personally more attractive sister, Elizabeth, came upon the scene at Lichfield, and Day promptly commenced to pay his court to her. She received his addresses with rather more favour than her sister had done; but, telling him plainly that she

attached little weight to his philosophical objections to those accomplishments of polite society which he had never endeavoured to attain, she gave him to understand that she would be much more likely to accept him for a husband if he were to acquire the manners of the world, and abandon his present austere singularities of air, habit, and address. A compromise was accordingly effected between the parties. Day promised to go to France and do all that could be done to acquire a pleasing deportment; while Elizabeth, on her part, promised not to go to London, or Bath, or any other public place of amusement until his return. In the meantime, she would also go through a prescribed course of reading. Edgeworth, whose passion for Honora had revived as soon as his friend's affections were transferred to her sister, and who judged that his only safety lay in flight, accompanied Day to Lyons. The latter gave up eight hours a day to learn the arts of dancing, fencing, and horsemanship; and, as his legs were not straight, was also condemned to sit pent up in durance vile for hours together, 'with his feet in the stocks, a book in his hands, and contempt in his heart.' Sad to relate, the crooked legs refused to be straightened out, in spite of these heroic efforts. Having learnt all that the French experts could manage to teach him, Day returned to England to claim the hand of Elizabeth Sneyd. But that young lady was forced to confess that 'Thomas Day, *black-*

guard' (as he used jestingly to call himself), was, after all, less unpleasing to her than 'Thomas Day, *gentleman'*; and she declined to marry him. Miss Seward evidently thought Elizabeth was not without excuse for her apparent capriciousness; for, says the Swan, Mr. Day's efforts at society manners were more really ungraceful than his natural stoop and unfashionable air; and the showy dress in which he came back from France was most unbecoming to him. We are not here concerned with Edgeworth's many marriages; but it may be mentioned, in passing, that he ultimately wedded both these charming ladies who had refused his bosom friend. Four months after becoming for the first time a widower in 1773, he married Honora Sneyd; and, within eight months of Honora's death in 1780, he married her sister Elizabeth.

Day's fluctuating affections now returned for a time to Sabrina, who had developed into a very charming young lady. Edgeworth says that Day was certainly never more loved by any woman than he was by Sabrina, and that no woman was ever personally more agreeable to him. After his rejection by Elizabeth Sneyd, at any rate, he was just on the point of proposing to marry, after all, the favourite girl of his own rearing, when a trifling circumstance occurred to change his intention. He had left Sabrina at the house of a friend, under strict injunctions as to some peculiar fancies of his own respecting her dress. In what

particular she gave offence does not appear. According to Edgeworth, she neglected, or undervalued, or forgot something. She did, or she did not, wear certain long sleeves, or some handkerchief, which had been the subject of his dislike or of his liking. And he, considering this as a criterion of her attachment to him, as well as a proof of her want of strength of mind, quitted her for ever!

He then took up his residence in London, and commenced author with a poem, entitled *The Dying Negro,* in which he denounced the Americans for their maintenance of slavery. But as marriage was still the principal object of the young philosopher's consideration, his friend, Dr. Small, of Birmingham, kept a continual look out for him, and never failed to report on the merits and qualifications of any suitable lady whom he might happen to see. At last, in Miss Milnes, of Wakefield, a young lady two or three and twenty years of age, of much culture, great benevolence, and the possessor of a considerable fortune, the match-making doctor believed himself to have found the ideal help-meet for his friend. Day's specified requirements seem to have been a combination of the spirit of a Roman matron, with the simplicity and physical health of a Highland mountaineer, and the culture of a London Bluestocking. But he wanted other things as well. When Dr. Small discoursed of the incomparable lady from Yorkshire, Day at once

inquired—'Has she white and large arms?'—'She has.'—'Does she wear long petticoats?'—'Uncommonly long.'—'Is she tall, and strong, and healthy?' This question could not be answered so satisfactorily; and after being forced to admit that the lady was small, and not particularly robust, Dr. Small was constrained to argue: 'My dear friend, can you possibly expect that a woman of charming temper, benevolent mind, and cultivated understanding, with a distinguished character, with views of life congenial with your own, with an agreeable person, and a large fortune, should be also formed exactly according to a picture that exists in your imagination?' Day replied that his chief objection was her fortune, as he could hardly expect compliance with his ascetic plan of life from a person of such affluent circumstances. However, after some acquaintance with the lady, and a provisional courtship, during which he discussed with her every subject of opinion or speculation on which he held strong views, and on which it was possible for them to disagree, he was induced, in view of her evident tender devotion to his talents and his person, to propose marriage, on condition that they should retire together into the country, shun the infectious taint of polite society, abandon luxuries and all that the world calls pleasures, and, after supplying the ordinary comforts of life to themselves, devote the surplus of their fortunes to clothing the naked and

feeding the hungry. Miss Milnes agreed to these strange terms of her eccentric lover, and in August 1778 they were married at Bath. Day insisted that his wife's fortune should be settled entirely beyond his control, in order that she might the more readily separate from him, if the experiment proved too much for her endurance. The reader will probably expect to learn that they parted before the year was out. But it is not the least extraordinary part of this extraordinary story, that Mrs. Day remained a devoted wife to the day of her husband's death, and when he died was inconsolable for his loss.

It will perhaps be convenient at this point to state what became of Sabrina. When she left school, Day allowed her £50 a year, and continued to correspond with her paternally, but they do not appear to have often met. She was a general favourite in the various houses in which she lived, and was frequently the guest of Dr. Darwin and other of Day's friends in Lichfield, especially of the Sewards at the Bishop's Palace. About two years after Day's marriage, and when Sabrina was twenty-three years of age, Mr. Bicknell, now a barrister of some practice, happening to meet her after several years' absence, at once fell in love, and asked her to be his wife. She accepted him provisionally, but declared that she would not marry either him or anybody else without Mr. Day's consent. Day wrote, rather ungraciously: 'I do not refuse my

consent to your marrying Mr. Bicknell; but remember you have not asked my *advice*.' One wonders whether his advice would have been that she should wait until his dear friend Edgeworth again became a widower, and wanted another wife! However that may be, he duly paid down the promised dowry of £500. Five or six years later Bicknell died, leaving her with two children, and little or no means for their support. Day then allowed her £30 a year, a not very munificent annuity, upon which the Swan of Lichfield comments—'To have been more bounteous *must* surely have been in his *heart*, but it was not in his *system*.' Sabrina was not named in Day's will, but Mrs. Day continued the allowance of £30 a year, and bequeathed its continuance from her own fortune for Mrs. Bicknell's life.

Mr. and Mrs. Day spent the winter of 1778-9 in lodgings at Hampstead, a place which, we must remember, was as much cut off from the life of the metropolis in those days, as the New Forest is now. Edgeworth and his second wife (the charming Honora) paid them a visit there, and the former declared—'I never saw any woman so entirely bent upon accommodating herself to the sentiments and wishes and will of a husband.' There was, nevertheless, he says, a continual flow of discussion between them, and Mrs. Day was nothing loath to support on any occasion an opinion of her own. In 1779, Day bought a house

and small estate called Stapleford-Abbot, near Abridge in Essex. The house was indifferent, and the land worse. The former had only one good room, and our self-sufficient philosopher proceeded, in characteristic fashion, to make some necessary additions to his little mansion. Edgeworth's account of this building experiment is as follows:—

'When Mr. Day determined to dip his unsullied hands in mortar, he bought at a stall Ware's *Architecture*; this he read with persevering assiduity for three or four weeks before he began his operations. He had not, however, followed the occupation a week before he became tired of it, as it completely deranged his habits of discussion with Mrs. Day in their daily walks in the fields, or prevented their close application to books when in the house. Masons, calling for supplies of various sorts, which had not been suggested in the great body of architecture which he had procured with so much care, annoyed the young builder exceedingly. Sills, lintels, door and window cases were wanting before they had been thought of; and the carpenter, to whose presence he had looked forward, but at a distant period, was now summoned and hastily set to work to keep the masons going. Mr. Day was deep in a treatise written by some French agriculturist, to prove that any soil may be rendered fertile by sufficient ploughing, when the masons desired to know where he would have the window of the new room on the first floor. I was present at the question, and offered to assist my friend. No—he sat immovable in his chair, and gravely demanded of the mason whether the wall might not be built first, and a place for the window cut out afterwards. The mason stared at Mr. Day with an expression of the most unfeigned surprise. "Why, sir, to be sure, it is very possible; but I believe, sir, it

is more common to put in the window-cases while the house is building, and not afterwards." Mr. Day, however, with great coolness, ordered the wall to be built without any opening for windows, which was done accordingly.'

The room in question, it appears, was intended for a dressing-room for Mrs. Day, and the poor lady had always to perform her toilet by candle-light, for no window was ever put in up to the time of Day's disposal of the house. In 1781 they left Abridge, and settled at Anningsley, near Ottershaw, in Surrey. Of all the arts, agriculture, in Day's opinion, was the most beneficial to mankind; and the people employed in it he considered to be the stamina of the human species. But, as he entered on his farming projects with little more preliminary information than sufficed him for his building operations, it is not surprising that the result was not a financial success. He was satisfied, however, to lose money, provided he improved his estate, and benefited the poor. Keir says, that if any in his neighbourhood wanted employment, Day provided it; if any were sick, Day supplied them with medicines, or with food and cordials from his kitchen; if any wanted advice, legal or other, Day was always ready to give it. He also sought every opportunity of converse with his poorer neighbours; and, being at some distance from any church, he always invited them to his house on Sundays to listen to his reading of family prayers. In 1789 he wrote from Anningsley to Edgeworth :—

'Were I to give up farming I should have less care, but I should also become more sedentary . . . and the very absence of that care would expose me infinitely more to hypochondriacism: which I am now totally free from. I have besides another very material reason, which is, that it enables me to employ the poor; and the result of all my speculations about humanity is, that the only way of benefiting mankind is to give them employment, and make them *earn* their money.'

Considering the special vices of his age to be vanity, effeminacy, and the love of luxury, Day from the first had determined to make his rule of life a practical protest against these. His wife had no carriage nor maid, and gave up her harpsichord; while he denied himself all those gratifications from painting, sculpture, and architecture, to which his fortune might well have entitled him. He did, indeed, form a large library; but his choice of books was strictly regulated, not by the splendour or rarity of the editions, by considerations of fine paper, gilt leather, or old vellum, but solely by his estimate of the value of the ideas they contained. A collection of books was also, of course, a necessary part of his equipment as a publicist.

He took a keen interest in public affairs. During the eight years of his residence at Anningsley, he published, *Reflections on the Present State of England and the Independence of America*, in 1782; *The Letters of Marius; or, Reflections upon the Peace, the East India Bill, and the Present Crisis*, in 1784; *Fragments of Original Letters* (*written in* 1776) *on the*

Slavery of the Negroes, in 1784; *Dialogue between a Justice of the Peace and a Farmer*, in 1785; and *A Letter to Arthur Young on the Exportation of Wool*, in 1788. He also joined a 'Society for Constitutional Information,' and spoke with much effect at meetings in Essex, Surrey, and Berks. He advocated Parliamentary Reform, because he believed, with Lord Chatham, that 'a portion of new health might be infused into the Constitution, to enable it to bear its infirmities.' But he could never be induced to stand for Parliament himself. In answer to certain representations on the subject, he wrote the following highly characteristic epistle to Dr. Jebb:—

'How is it possible that I should descend to the common meannesses of the bought and buying tribe, or stoop to solicit the suffrages of the multitude, more than I have hitherto done the patronage of the great. Whatever may be the common and flimsy pretensions of popular men, I believe that few entertain any doubt that their own interest or vanity is in reality the predominant principle of their exertions. It was not in the forum, amidst the tribe of begging, cringing, shuffling, intriguing candidates, but in their farms, and amidst their rural labours, that the Romans were obliged to seek for men, who were really animated with an holy zeal for their country's glory, and capable of preferring her interest to their own. I never pretend to the abilities of these illustrious men —whom we are more inclined to admire than imitate, but I pretend to all their indifference to public fame, and to all their disinterestedness. Be assured, then, that these principles, which have always been so wrought up into the groundwork of my character that they never can be separated without

marring the little merit of the piece, will always be an invincible obstacle to my entering the list of public competition.'

After a time, however, he came to despair of making any impression, either by reason or by ridicule, on the ingrained habits of grown men and women; and he consequently determined to throw all his energies into an attempt to form the minds of the rising generation, in accordance with what he held to be the principles of right reason and sound morality. With this object, he set about the composition of *The History of Sandford and Merton*, of which the first volume appeared in 1783, the second in 1787, and the third in 1789. In Day's view, the most prominent evil of his time was effeminacy of manners, and this he set himself to counteract; the greatest needs of the age were manliness, independence, and certain other sterling qualities of character, which he endeavoured to set forth with all the energy and eloquence at his command. It would be impossible in any available limits to give an intelligible idea of the work. Those who have never read it may be confidently recommended to make the attempt at once; and those who have read it, or who had it read to them in their childhood, will find it a pleasing experience to renew their acquaintance with an old favourite. In the words of the most eminent of recent literary critics, it is, 'in spite of its quaint didacticism, still among the best children's books in the language';

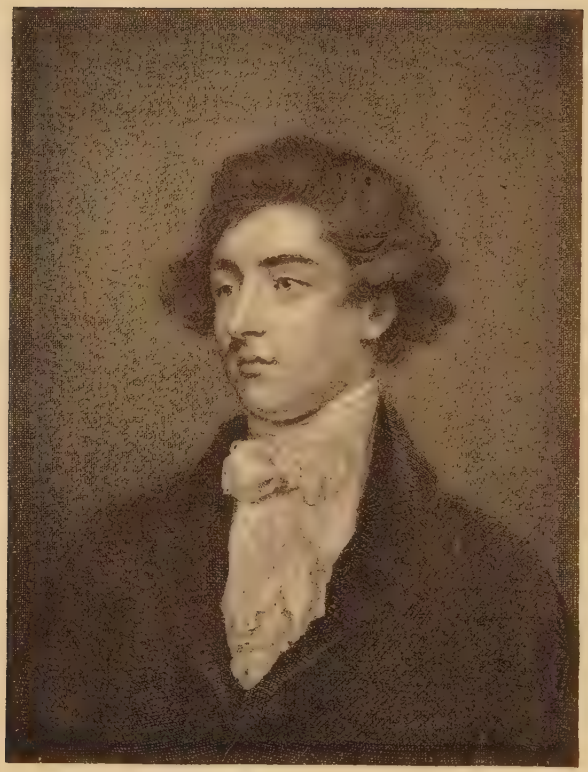
and it may perhaps be found both pleasant and profitable by children of a larger growth.

Soon after the appearance of the last volume of *Sandford and Merton*, its author came to a sudden and untimely end. A martyr to theory throughout his life, Day became a victim to theory in his death. On September the 28th, 1789, he started from Anningsley, riding an unbroken colt, with the intention of visiting his wife, who was staying with his mother at Bear Hill. He had always firmly held, that any animal could be controlled by kindness. Although not a good horseman, he disdained to employ a horse-breaker; and the animal he rode on this occasion was a favourite foal, which he had reared, fed, and, as he thought, tamed, with his own hand. During the journey, however, the colt shied, and Day was thrown on his head, receiving such injuries that he died within an hour. According to Miss Seward, Mrs. Day never afterwards saw the sun. 'She lay in bed, into the curtains of which no light was admitted during the day; and only rose to stray alone through her garden when night gave her sorrows congenial gloom.' However that may be, it is certain that she survived her adored husband only two years, and then died, broken-hearted for his loss.

Day was certainly an original. Most people are as much alike as coins of the realm, and might almost have been struck out, like coins, with the same die.

Day was more like a peculiar medal, of which the mould was broken after the first impression had been cast. It is small wonder that he was a puzzle to his contemporaries, or that widely divergent views were taken of his character. Keir says that some imputed his friend's unostentatious mode of life to avarice, although the greater part of his income was spent in generosity; others attributed his retirement to misanthropy, although his life was devoted to the service of mankind; and many were only able to explain his conduct to their own satisfaction as the result of an abnormal love of singularity and caprice, whereas it is abundantly evident that all his actions flowed from fixed principles, with a consistency seldom equalled. His biographer, who knew him intimately for twenty years, declares that he 'never showed the smallest inclination to appear more or less wise, good, or learned, or more or less anything, than he really was.' No service was too laborious to be undertaken for his friends; and he was uniformly kind and generous to the neighbouring poor, notwithstanding that his bounty was often rewarded by ingratitude. As Sir Leslie Stephen says, 'his amusing eccentricities were indeed only the symptom of a real nobility of character, too deeply in earnest to submit to the ordinary compromises of society.' Edgeworth declares that he puts the singularities of his excellent friend on record, by way of a warning that we may have too much of even

such a good thing as reason. He need have been under little apprehension on that score. The Νόμος is no less powerful in modern times than Grote represents it to have been amongst the ancient Greeks; exercising still plenary power, spiritual as well as temporal, over individual minds, and moulding emotion as well as intellect according to the local type. Men like Day, who evolve a code of morals for themselves, and consistently act upon it in defiance of the law and custom of their contemporaries, will never be very numerous. At the same time, their consistency in such a set of fixed principles is not necessarily wisdom. And it must be admitted that Day affords a striking example of the failure of one of the best-intentioned of men who ever lived, to compress human life within the rigid limits of a cast-iron system.



WILLIAM BECKFORD.

From an engraving by T. A. Dean of the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

THE SPLENDID AUTHOR OF 'VATHEK.'

When William Beckford died in 1844, a crowd of no less than 20,000 persons assembled at his funeral. His reputation as an author would never have attracted such a concourse of people. But rumour had been busy with his name in other connections. He was known to have inherited, when a child, one of the largest private fortunes in Europe. It was known that he had built for himself, like Coleridge's Kubla Khan, a succession of lordly pleasure-houses—the earthly paradise at Cintra, celebrated by Byron in *Childe Harold*, the great Gothic abbey at Fonthill, and the lesser, but nevertheless splendid, Tower on the top of Lansdowne Hill at Bath—all of which he had filled to overflowing with fine pictures, rare books, and costly specimens of the artistic work and bric-à-brac of all nations and ages. It was also known that he had had reverses, and that he had spent the greater part of his life in strict seclusion. And there were graver rumours concerning this spoilt child of fortune. It was said that a mysterious blight had fallen upon him; that, like the occupant of Tennyson's *Palace*

of Art, he had said to his soul, 'Make merry and carouse,' but that, after thriving and prospering for some years, he had fallen

> 'Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
> Struck through with pangs of hell.'

Popular rumour, in this case as in so many others, had overshot the mark; and, as a matter of fact, there is nothing specially marvellous or tragic to be discovered in William Beckford's history. At the same time, it is perfectly clear, from what can now be gleaned about him, that but for the extraordinary ineptitude of his chosen biographer, Cyrus Redding, Beckford's character and career would have afforded abundant material for a highly interesting psychological study.

He was born on October 1, 1760, and came of an old Gloucestershire family, said to have been settled at Bekeford, near Tewkesbury, before the Conquest. He had great pride in his pedigree, and, with more or less countenance from the Herald's Office, he traced his line back on the father's side to John of Gaunt, and on the mother's side to a Norman cobbler named Olider de Crespin. What, however, is a good deal more certain is that his father was that Lord Mayor Beckford, the friend of Chatham and of Wilkes, who made the celebrated impromptu reply to George III. when that monarch snubbed a certain deputation from the Corporation of the City of London, and that his

mother was daughter and co-heir of the Hon. George Hamilton, M.P. for Wells. When William was eleven years of age his father died, and the boy was left sole heir to an enormous fortune, estimated to amount to a hundred thousand a year, in addition to a million sterling 'in ready money.' His mother seems to have had some unintelligible objections to a University career, and the boy was consequently educated at home, under the care of a private tutor, being afterwards sent, to complete his education, to Geneva, with the same reverend gentleman as tutor and companion. He is described as a boy of quick and lively disposition, but of desultory habits, and somewhat wilful, capricious, and extravagant—qualities which were certainly characteristic of him in after life. Redding relates a curious story to the effect that the great Earl of Chatham thought the future author of *Vathek* of so dangerously imaginative a constitution that he advised Mrs. Beckford to keep all such books as *The Arabian Nights* out of his way. So far as we can gather, the mother either thought little of the advice, or was unable to carry it into practice, for young Beckford seems, from the first, to have been left to browse in the paternal library at his own sweet will. At the age of seventeen he made his first essay in authorship by the publication of a satirical little book entitled *A History of Extraordinary Painters.* As may be imagined, it is a totally unreadable pro-

duction; but it doubtless served well enough the only purpose he seems to have had in view in compiling it, namely, to induce his mother's old housekeeper to show the pictures at Fonthill House to mystified visitors as the works of 'Og of Basan,' 'Sucrewasser of Vienna,' and other ludicrously-named mythical painters. In spite of the discouragement of his tutor, who was probably of the Earl of Chatham's way of thinking, young Beckford devoted himself with great ardour, not merely to the perusal of such works as *The Arabian Nights*, but to the systematic pursuit of Persian and other Oriental learning. And it was one consequence of this absorbing infatuation, that in his twenty-first or twenty-second year he wrote the weird little story of *Vathek*, which has been so highly, and, in the present writer's opinion, so extravagantly praised. A strange lapse of memory on the part of the author, or an equally strange misunderstanding on the part of his biographer, has given this story a factitious interest. Redding's statement is that Beckford told him that he wrote *Vathek* (in French) at a single sitting of two days and three nights. He also said, according to Redding's account, that the English version of the story, which was published in 1786, was not only printed without his permission, but that he never even knew who the translator was. Both these statements were conclusively disposed of by Dr. Garnett, in his intro-

duction to a beautiful illustrated edition of *Vathek* in 1893. By means of certain autograph letters preserved in the Morrison collection, Dr. Garnett was able to show, on the best of all authority, viz. that of Beckford himself, that the work certainly occupied several months at least, and in all probability somewhere about a year; that the idea of the story was first suggested to Beckford by the Rev. Samuel Henley; that it was this not very reverend gentleman who afterwards turned Beckford's French into English, and that the author was so pleased with the version that he wrote saying—'the original when first born scarce gave me so much rapture as your translation.' But, it is true, this English version was published without Beckford's permission. He wished the story to make its first appearance in his original French; and Henley played him a mean trick, during his absence on the Continent, by publishing the translation in London as an anonymous version of *An Arabian Tale, from an unpublished manuscript.* Of course, if *Vathek* had been written, by an unpractised youth, at a single sitting, we should have had to acknowledge the fact as a very extraordinary *tour de force*; but, even in that case, the story would have had to stand on its own merits. And what these are it is somewhat hard to define. Lord Byron was one of the first to sing its praises; and, not content with commending the power of imagination, beauty of descrip-

tion, and correctness of costume which he found in it, the noble poet declared that, as an Eastern tale, even *Rasselas* must bow before it. Poets are not always the best of critics; but even Byron might have been expected to see that *Rasselas* and *Vathek* are works of a totally dissimilar kind, and incapable of comparison. Johnson never made the slightest attempt at Oriental modes of thought or expression, and his story, if story it can be called, is as much a moral dissertation as a number of the *Rambler*, or the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. *Vathek*, on the other hand, is quite innocent of any incumbrance in the way of a moral, and is nothing more nor less than an avowed imitation of those extravagant Eastern fictions which, under the name of *Arabian Nights*, have been for generations to the child mind of Europe a perpetual fountain of wonder and delight. Whether the imitation be so successful that, as Dr. Garnett says, it 'might appear without disadvantage . . . with Aladdin on its right hand and Ali Baba on its left' is a matter on which there is room for difference of opinion. And the present writer is bound to confess that, to his thinking, *Vathek* is no better than a ghastly nightmare.

A less known, but much more notable, literary performance of Beckford's was the fruit of two continental journeys which he made in 1780 and 1782. The second tour, which commenced just after his

coming of age, was arranged after a fashion of his own. He engaged an eminent artist, a great German doctor, and a competent musician to accompany him; and they travelled in three carriages, with numerous servants, led horses, and outriders. It is scarcely surprising to be told that, when travelling with a cavalcade like this, he was occasionally mistaken for the Emperor of Austria, or some other royal personage, making a visit *incognito* to Rome. A brilliant account of these two tours, made up of letters which he had written home from time to time, was published, with the title *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*, in 1783, but, although issued anonymously, the book was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation, because it had been represented to him that certain flights of imagination, and the expression of his rooted aversion to all field sports, would irreparably injure his Parliamentary prospects. Fifty-one years later he republished the letters, together with others describing subsequent tours in Portugal and Spain, and a visit to the celebrated monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha, because, he says, 'some justly admired authors having condescended to glean a few stray thoughts from them,' he thought they might possibly be less unworthy of emerging from the shade into daylight than he had previously imagined. The letters are written in the heyday of youthful spirits and confidence, and they depict with wonderful vividness

the superficial aspect of Europe while the old order of things still existed, when the Netherlands were still Austrian and Venice still a republic, and the prince-bishoprics of the Rhine were still in their old pomp and dignity,—or rather, as he regarded it, in their old pomp and absurdity. Great as was Beckford's hurry to get through Germany and reach his beloved Italy, he could sketch off with an admirably light and felicitous touch anything which amused his fancy by the way. Witness the following vignette of the Court of Bavaria, as he saw it on Sunday, July 23, 1780, with its gaily attired ladies, and its gentlemen as smart as swords, bags, and pretty clothes could make them, looking 'exactly like the fine people one sees represented on Dresden porcelain':—

'Immediately after supper [he says] we drove once more out of town, to a garden and tea-room, where all degrees and ages dance jovially together till morning. Whilst one party wheel briskly away in the waltz, another amuse themselves in a corner with cold meat and rhenish; that despatched, out they whisk amongst the dancers, with an impetuosity I little expected to have found in Bavaria. After turning round and round, with a rapidity that is quite astounding to an English dancer, the music changes to a slower movement, and then follows a succession of zigzag minuets, performed by old and young, straight and crooked, noble and plebeian, all at once, from one end of the room to the other. Tallow candles snuffing and stinking, dishes clanging at the risk of showering down upon you their savoury contents, heads scratching, and all sorts of performances going forward at the same moment; the flutes, oboes, and bassoons, snorting, grunting, and whining

with peculiar emphasis; now fast, now slow, just as variety commands, who seems to rule the ceremonial of this motley assembly, where every distinction of rank and privilege is totally forgotten. Once a week, on Sundays that is to say, the rooms are open, and Monday is generally far advanced before they are deserted.'

And by way of comment on things German, he adds, 'if good humour and coarse merriment are all that people desire, here they are to be found in perfection.' Beckford had the imagination of a poet; and although he may have wanted the accomplishment of verse, and have made no attempt to attain a rhythmic beauty of prose, such as Ruskin has since taught us to look for in descriptions of mountain glory, yet it is not too much to say that there was no living English writer in 1780 who could have given us anything better than the following sketch of Tyrol forest scenery,—hurriedly struck off, it must be remembered, in the course of travel, by a youth of twenty-one:—

'We struck into a grove of pines, the tallest and most flourishing we had yet beheld. There seemed no end to these forests, except where little irregular spots of herbage, fed by cattle, intervened. Whenever we gained an eminence, it was only to discover more ranges of dark wood, variegated with meadows and glittering streams. White clover and a profusion of sweet-scented flowers clothe their banks; above waves the mountain-ash, glowing with scarlet berries; and beyond rise hills, rocks, and mountains, piled upon one another, and fringed with fir to their topmost acclivities. Perhaps the Norwegian forests alone equal these in grandeur

and extent. Those which cover the Swiss Highlands rarely convey such vast ideas. There, the woods climb only half way up their ascents, which are then circumscribed by snows: here no boundaries are set to their progress, and the mountains, from base to summit, display rich, unbroken masses of vegetation.

As we were surveying this prospect, a thick cloud, fraught with thunder, obscured the horizon, whilst flashes of lightning startled our horses, whose snorts and stampings resounded through the woods. The impending tempests gave additional gloom to the firs, and we travelled several miles in total darkness. One moment the clouds began to fleet, and a faint gloom promised serener intervals, but the next was all blackness and terror. Presently a deluge of rain poured down upon the valley, and in a short time the torrents, beginning to swell, raged with such violence as to be forded with difficulty.

Twilight drew on, just as we had passed the most terrible; then ascending a mountain, whose pines and birches rustled with the storm, we saw a little lake below. A deep azure haze veiled its eastern shore, and lowering vapours concealed the cliffs to the south; but over its western extremities hung a few transparent clouds; the rays of a struggling sunset streamed on the surface of the waters, tinging the brow of a green promontory with tender pink. . . . Looking around, I shuddered at a craggy mountain, clothed with forests, and almost perpendicular, that was absolutely to be surmounted before we could arrive at Walchen-see.'

Scattered up and down these letters may be found numerous indications of some of the personal characteristics of the author, which the reader who has tried to get any definite impression from the confused and

incoherent account of Mr. Cyrus Redding will probably welcome as a godsend. His eager and impetuous temperament soon breaks out. On reaching Innspruck, such was his impatience to set eyes on the promised land of Italy that he continued to travel not only all day but all night long. On another occasion, in his eagerness to view the Rock of Circe from Terracina, and in disgust with the slowly moving carriage and its cursing postillions, he mounted his horse, he tells us, and flew before them, seeming to catch inspiration from the breeze. His love of animals, and aversion to field sports on account of the cruelty they involve, are frequently displayed. He describes the gorgeous butterflies to be met with in Italy, and the previously unknown varieties which he might have added to some collector's cabinet, but he could not find it in his heart to destroy their felicity, 'to scatter their bright plumage, and snatch them for ever from the realms of light and flowers.' Fishing he looked upon as butchery. On the occasion of a visit to one of the monasteries, the prior ordered a fishing-party for his amusement. It was, however, no great amusement, he says—

'for one who detests the sight of wretched animals, inveigled from their aquatic homes, and cast on a dry bank, gasping for life, and distending their jaws in torment. Full often have I fancied what woful grimaces we children of Adam would be compelled to make should ever the colossal inhabitants of a superior planet be permitted, on some dread day of retribution, to drop down on the earth on an angling

tour, and fish us out of our element for their dinner or recreation.'

The fancy pleases him, and he thinks what fine sport there would be, and how many humans would bite, swallowing hook and all, if only the bait were sufficiently tempting and adjusted to the appetites of different men for the objects of their individual pursuit. Holding these views, the mere mention of vivisection naturally rouses him to red-hot indignation, and he can hardly find words strong enough to express his abhorrence of the experiments of 'the hellish Majendie.' His mind, he tells us, was chameleon-like, and very apt to take its colour from its immediate surroundings; but this tendency was well corrected by a number of particularly energetic aversions. One can readily see, for instance, how little cordiality would be possible between this imaginative and somewhat fantastic young man and the fox-hunting, port-wine-drinking Wiltshire squires who were to be his neighbours at Fonthill and his colleagues in Parliament. When asked how he passed his time at Lucca, in his twenty-first year, the reply was that he escaped from the visits, dinners, conversazioni, and glories of the town, to some wild spot in the neighbouring hills, where the arbutus flourished, and where he might catch a glimpse of the distant sea; 'my horse tied to a cypress, and myself cast upon the grass, like Palerin of Oliva, with a tablet and pencil in my hand, a basket of grapes by my side,

and a crooked stick to shake down the chesnuts.' And years afterwards he speaks of the sight of some visiting-cards, lying on the table when he reached home, as chilling him like a fall of snow, for he could not bear to think of the cold idleness of going about, day after day, dropping little bits of pasteboard in return. His mind was of the Oriental type, which loves quiet and luxurious reverie, being at the same time, as we shall see, apt to break out into occasional bursts of gorgeous spectacular display.

In 1783 Beckford married Lady Margaret Gordon, a daughter of the Earl of Aboyne. But, after a brief period of happiness in Switzerland, his wife died in 1786, leaving him with two infant daughters. It was Beckford's habit, when in emotional trouble, to seek distraction in new scenes, and on the death of his wife he flew from Switzerland to Portugal. After a good deal of travelling about from one place to another, he settled down for a time at Cintra, in quarters which, if not quite the earthly paradise described by Byron, were at least Oriental in their magnificence. He describes himself as obtaining a few hours of uninterrupted calm by lying supine on a glossy straw mat on the floor of his ample saloon, contemplating the serene summer sky, while a faint breeze blowing aside the curtains now and again showed the summit of the woods in the garden, and beyond a wide expanse of country, terminated by plains of sea and hazy promontories. And

elsewhere he gives the following picture of his villa on a furiously hot August day :—

'I trifled away the whole morning in my pavilion, surrounded by fidalgos in flowered bedgowns, and musicians in violet-coloured accoutrements, with broad straw hats, like bonzes or telapoins, looking as sun-burnt, vacant, and listless as the inhabitants of Ormus or Bengal; so that my company as well as my apartment wore the most decided oriental appearance: the divan raised a few inches above the floors, the gilt trellice-work of the windows, and the pellucid streams of water, rising from a tank immediately beneath them, supplied in endless succession by springs from the native rock.

'An agreeable variety prevails in my Asiatic saloon; half its curtains admit no light, and display the richest folds; the other half are transparent, and cast a mild glow on the mat and sofas. Large clear mirrors multiply this profusion of drapery, and several of my guests seemed never tired of running from corner to corner to view the different groups of objects reflected on all sides, in the most unexpected directions, as if they fancied themselves admitted by enchantment to peep into a labyrinth of magic chambers.'

Beckford became an intimate of the Marialva Palace, and formed an enduring friendship with the Grand Prior, as well as with the old marquis, his brother. The latter had a touch of the collecting mania, which was soon to break out in so extravagant a form in Beckford himself. The marquis had a great fancy for clocks :—

'I counted no less than ten in his bedchamber, four or five in full swing, making a loud hissing; they were chiming and striking away (for it was exactly six) when I followed my

conductor up and down half a dozen staircases into a saloon hung with rusty damask. A table in the centre of this antiquated apartment was covered with rarities brought forth for our inspection: curious shell-work, ivory crucifixes, models of ships, housings embroidered with feathers, and the Lord knows what besides, stinking of camphor enough to knock me down.'

Another interesting character, of whom he gives us an admirable sketch, was the archbishop. This remarkable man was originally a clown, then a common soldier, then a corporal, and from a corporal somehow blossomed into a monk, in which last capacity he gave so many proofs of toleration and good-humour that the powerful minister, Pombal, judged him to be sufficiently shrewd, jovial, and ignorant to make a harmless and comfortable confessor to the Princess of Brazil. When the Princess came to the throne, however, her shrewd confessor became Archbishop, Grand Inquisitor, and the mainspring of the government of Portugal. When Beckford received an invitation to dine with this august personage, he was told that he had no choice but to obey, for everybody in those regions obeyed the archbishop, the members of the royal family not excepted. He found the omnipotent prelate sitting upon a sofa, wrapped up in an old snuff-coloured greatcoat, which was sadly patched and tattered. But a sturdier fellow he never saw. 'He seemed to anoint himself with the oil of gladness, to laugh and grow fat, in spite of the critical situation of affairs in this kingdom, and the

just fears all its true patriots entertain of seeing it once more relapse into a Spanish province.' The Archbishop led his visitor into a vast saloon of the palace, crowded with half the dignitaries of the kingdom—bishops, heads of orders, secretaries of state, generals, lords of the bedchamber, and courtiers of all denominations, as fine and conspicuous as embroidered uniforms, stars, crosses, and gold keys could make them. But immediately the Archbishop appeared—

'down went half the party upon their knees, some with petitions and some with memorials; those begging for places and promotions, and these for benedictions, of which my reverend conductor was by no means prodigal. He seemed to treat all these eager demonstrations of fawning servility with the most contemptuous composure, and pushing through the crowd, which divided respectfully to give us passage, beckoned to the Viscount Ponte de Lima, the Marquis of Lavradio, the Count d'Obidos, and two or three of the lords-in-waiting, into a mean little room, not above twenty by fourteen.'

In return for all their fulsome adulation, these courtiers, it appears, got nothing from the Archbishop, at least on this occasion, but rebuffs and gruntings, being told, in the English visitor's presence, that they were a parcel of flattering scoundrels, glittering like gold, but really as mean as mud. Beckford seems to have conceived a warm regard for this imperious old man, and when, not long after, the Archbishop-confessor was called to his last account, bears testi-

mony to the kindness of heart, good-humour, and general benevolence which had found their way, notwithstanding the bluntness of his manner, to the hearts of others.

After fifteen years spent on the Continent, in this manner, Beckford at last returned to England at the age of thirty-six. He entered Parliament; but having no taste for public life, he took little active part in its proceedings. He settled down on the family estate at Fonthill, in Wiltshire, in 1796, and soon commenced that career of architectural and artistic extravagance which, during the following twenty-six years, cost him about £273,000. He lived in strict retirement, with a Dr. Eruhart as medical attendant, the Chevalier Franchi as musician and major-domo, the Abbé Maquin as topographer, herald, artist, and secretary in general, and some thirty servants of the household. Of course it was not long before he came into collision with the sporting squires of the neighbourhood. Huntsmen and others were perpetually trespassing on his grounds, and, finding remonstrances in vain, he built a high wall round all the planted and arable part of his land in order to exclude them. Then, finding the situation of old Fonthill house to be insalubrious, because it stood at the bottom of a wooded hill on the margin of a lake, he determined to erect a new building in another part of the grounds. The old house, which had been built by his father, and rebuilt,

after a fire, at a cost of £240,000, with its hall eighty-five feet long and thirty-eight broad, vaulted, and supported by stone piers, was eventually pulled down; and all the costly and luxurious furniture, most of the pictures, the cabinets, full of all sorts of rarities, and other things with which the famous Lord Mayor had decorated his mansion, were sold off in the August of 1801. It is said that the sale created such interest and excitement in the county that the getting in of that year's harvest was seriously retarded. Everything but the library and the finest of the pictures was disposed of, and, apparently, at a ruinous sacrifice, for an organ which had cost £2000 fetched only £290, and many other things went at a proportionately low price. Beckford seems to have set his heart upon having a new Gothic mansion of incomparable splendour, and he engaged Wyatt as architect at a fee of £20,000; but the result was hardly such a success as might have been anticipated. The work was hurried forward, under the personal superintendence of Beckford himself, no less than three hundred labourers being employed at one time. Of course the new Abbey was an imposing edifice, whatever may be said as to the merits or demerits of the general plan or the various details. It consisted of five distinct portions: a hall, 68 feet long by 28 wide, and 78 feet high; a north wing; a south wing; an eastern wing; and a great central tower rising 276 feet from its base to

the top of its pinnacles. But we may shrewdly suspect that the impetuous owner had somewhat too much to say both as regards plan and construction; for it is significant that the hall had to be rebuilt of nearly double its original dimensions, and that the central tower twice fell down. The cabinets of kings and princes, as well as the shops of dealers all over the world, were ransacked for rarities, and Beckford filled his imitation Abbey with superb and costly furniture, fine pictures, a finer library, and a dazzling and brilliant collection of articles of *virtu*, cabinets, statues, precious metal, and precious stones.

While the old house was still standing and the Abbey uncompleted, in 1800, Lord Nelson with Sir William and Lady Hamilton proposed to pay Beckford a visit, so he at once increased the number of his workmen to five hundred, and kept them working night and day, in order to give his visitors a spectacular surprise which would have done credit to his own Vathek, or to any of the most magnificent Caliphs of the *Arabian Nights*. After dark on December 23rd a row of carriages conveyed the guests from the steps of the old house to the new Abbey. The procession occupied three-quarters of an hour in driving through the superb grounds, which extended over nineteen acres within the wall, and three thousand more outside it. Passing under a Gothic arch, they entered what was supposed to be

the Abbot's domain. The road wound through thick woods of pine and fir, illuminated by numberless lamps hanging from the trees, and by flambeaux carried beside the vehicles. A military band played solemn airs and marches. There was a continuous roll of drums from distant eminences in the grounds; and ever and anon a blaze of lights, sometimes moving, sometimes stationary, revealed the gleaming of arms and armour. Arrived at the Abbey, its great doors, thirty feet high, were opened by a black dwarf, and the visitors were ushered, between two lines of soldiers, into the great hall, where they found a 'rich repast,' served in a long single line of enormous silver dishes, on ebony tables inlaid with ivory. The side-boards glittered with piles of plate, and the room was brilliantly lighted by innumerable wax candles in sconces of silver. Dinner over, the guests ascended a staircase lighted by mysterious-looking monastic figures, dressed in hooded gowns, and holding large wax torches, into rooms hung with yellow damask, and filled with rare and costly cabinets, with plate, cups, vases, and ewers, of solid gold. The entertainment concluded in the spacious library, which was fitted up in monastic style with shrines, reliquaries, and religious sculptures; and here Lady Hamilton delighted the company with some of her famous impersonations, especially that in which she represented Agrippina carrying in a golden urn the ashes

of Germanicus in order to excite the Roman people to avenge the death of her husband. Altogether Beckford may have congratulated himself on providing such a show as could then have been equalled nowhere else, and which could hardly have been surpassed even in our days by a Drury Lane Pantomime. The lugubrious Cyrus Redding also waxes eloquent over another show and procession on the occasion of Beckford's mother's funeral. She died in 1798, at West Hampstead, and what followed is thus described by the admiring biographer :—

'The body was taken to Salisbury, and there it lay in state, and the next day proceeded from that city followed by a train of mourners, Mr. Beckford's Fonthill household, and his numerous tenantry. They were met by between two and three hundred of the poor people around Fonthill, and in different villages, to many of whom, who were known personally to Mr. Beckford, he presented suits of mourning. Two troops, comprising the Fonthill Association, turned out at the lodge in military mourning. This was a corps raised, clothed, and armed at his expense. The procession proceeded in this way to the church, with solemn music. A cold collation was given in the hall of Fonthill house and other rooms to several hundreds of persons. Outside, ale and refreshments were distributed to the poor, and presents of mourning cloth.'

These more or less vulgar displays are very inconsistent with Beckford's professed love of quiet, and hatred of all disturbing forms and ceremonies; but

his is not the only character in which inconsistencies may be found; nor is this by any means the only inconsistency to be found in him. His biographer, for instance, has a good deal to say in commendation of Beckford's carefulness and precision in the settlement of his accounts. We are told that whatever he bought he always paid for before taking it away. When in town, he always carried about with him a large sum in bank-notes, arranged in envelopes according to their value: outside each envelope was the number and the date of every note it contained, and whenever he paid one away he put a mark against the number on the envelope, and wrote the name of the person to whom he paid it. Yet with all this care and precision to make sure that he never paid anybody a five-pound note twice over, there was joined a most culpable carelessness about other valuables—a handful of diamonds, for instance, being put into a china cup or vase, and left open to the fingers of servants and any other persons who might at any time be about the house. Mr. Redding praises the penny wisdom, and does not appear to see the pound foolishness. It is a minor inconsistency that notwithstanding all his enthusiasm for beautiful scenery it should never have occurred to him to pay a visit to his own plantations in the tropics; but that he should have plumed himself on driving higgling bargains with curiosity-dealers at home while he left his immense

Jamaica estates, which constituted the bulk of his fortune, entirely in the hands of unknown and untrustworthy agents, who lived and throve by systematically plundering him, is really little short of insanity. The Beckfords had been Jamaica planters for generations. Our hero's great-grandfather was Lieutenant-Governor of the Island—and died there, by the way, in an insane fit of passion, in 1710. His grandfather was Speaker of the House of Assembly; and at his death left twenty-four plantations and two thousand four hundred slaves to the son who became Lord Mayor of London. And all these, with numerous additions, fell to the share of the young author of *Vathek*, who never seems to have thought that they required any more looking after, so far as he was personally concerned, than the Bank of England. But in 1801 a cloud appeared on his horizon in the shape of a great lawsuit, the result of which was that an estate which had been in his family for sixty years, and which was of the value of £12,000 a year, was lost to him for want of a proper title. In the following year he was threatened with another lawsuit, and compromised the matter for £40,000. Then came other losses, to the amount of something like £30,000 a year; and on the top of all there followed the great deterioration in the value of West Indian property generally. The result of it all was that, by 1822, Beckford's income had become so greatly reduced that

he determined to dispose of Fonthill and its contents by auction.

The report of this determination seems to have created a great public sensation. The *Gentlemen's Magazine* for October 1822 states that 7200 admission tickets were issued to view the Abbey, and 10,000 copies of the catalogue sold at a high price. The *Literary Gazette* devoted five papers to the subject in the months of August and September; the *London Museum* issued eight weekly sheets of comment and criticism; the *Guardian* had five weekly essays on it; and the *Times*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, and *Morning Herald* contributed each its quota of original articles. William Hazlitt dealt with it in the pages of the *London Magazine*, in his usual forcible and philosophical manner. The collection, he said, was unique. The specimens exhibited were the best, the most highly finished, the most costly and curious of 'that kind of ostentatious magnificence which is calculated to gratify the sense of property in the owner, and to excite the wondering curiosity of the stranger, who is permitted to see, or (as a choice privilege and favour) even to touch, baubles so dazzling'; but he could scarcely restrain his scorn for those who thus worship the merely difficult, the unattainable, the exclusive, because, if broken or defaced, such things would be almost impossible to replace. A day or two before the date fixed for the auction, however, it was

announced that the Abbey, with all its contents, had been sold by private treaty. The purchaser, who had paid £330,000 for his bargain, was a Mr. John Farquhar, a man who had risen to affluence from the humblest beginnings, but who continued to live in a very penurious style, and had evidently bought the Abbey, not to live in, but as a mere speculation. In the following year he disposed of his purchase at a sale which occupied thirty-seven days, but whether he lost or gained by the speculation history recordeth not—nor does it very much matter. Beckford had taken care to remove his library and the choicest of his pictures before parting with Fonthill; and he immediately bought a house at Lansdowne Terrace, Bath, where, at the age of sixty-three, he promptly set about the formation of another private museum. He gradually bought up, or leased, the whole of the property for the distance of a mile on the side of Lansdowne Hill, and then, on the top thereof, proceeded, after the manner of Vathek, to build himself another tower (this time, however, only 130 feet in height), in order, according to his own account, that he might have a better view of the surrounding country. Some of the money obtained by the sale of Fonthill he laid out in annuities, a speculation that fell out well for him, for it appears that he paid only £10,000 for an annuity of £1000—and he lived just twenty-one years to enjoy it. The collecting went

merrily on, until the house and the tower were filled with his purchases, even the bedrooms overflowing with books, missals, drawings, pictures, miniatures, rare old china, and other articles of *virtu* of the choicest description. He was extraordinarily active and vigorous to the end of his life; and a visitor describes him, when eighty-three, as overflowing with buoyant spirits, pulling out huge volumes of engravings and running to a window with them when he wanted to show some rarity of his collection, or, if a stool or chair happened to be in his way, just leaping over it like a schoolboy. Mr. W. P. Frith, R.A., remembers very well what Beckford looked like in his latter days. He had gone one day to Phillips's auction rooms in Bond Street to have a look at a Holy Family, said to be by Raphael, but of doubtful authenticity, and while he was there his attention was drawn to an elderly, brisk, little gentleman, in a green coat with brass buttons, leather breeches, top-boots, and powdered hair, who, he was told, was Mr. Beckford. Having already studied the picture, young Frith now devoted his attention to the celebrated picture buyer. But, he says, the language in which that old gentleman criticised the Holy Family was quite unfit for the respectable pen of an octogenarian R.A. He spoke of it as if to himself, muttering—'That d—d thing a Raphael? Great Heavens! Think of that now! Can there *be* such d—d fools

as to believe *that* a Raphael? What a d—d fool I was to come here!' And without a glance at the other pictures the aged connoisseur turned on his heel and walked out of the place.

The curiosity aroused by Beckford's retired mode of life, together with certain obvious peculiarities, such as a habit of talking to himself as he went about alone, led to the manufacture of many absurd stories about him. Many an inhabitant of Bath was firmly persuaded that the recluse practised astrology and magic, and brought up a brood of black imps or dwarfs, in the mysterious Lansdowne Tower. And while he lived at Fonthill, some curious strangers even went the length of disguising themselves as workmen in order to gain admittance to the house, with a hope of seeing something of the extraordinary proceedings which were currently believed to be carried on there. Mr. W. P. Frith, in his Reminiscences, tells of an adventure which he vouches for as having happened to a cousin of his at Fonthill. This cousin had retired from business at an early age with a handsome competence, and was a man of some intellect and artistic taste. He lived at Bath; and it appears that he laid a wager with some friends that he would not only walk in the gardens of Fonthill, but penetrate into the house itself. He spent many an hour by the great gate in the wall before any opportunity arrived; but one day a tradesman leaving the lodge omitted to

fasten the gate behind him, and the alert watcher quickly passed in. Making his way across the park, he arrived at a low wall which divided the park from the gardens, and as he was leaning over this, admiring the gorgeous display of flowers, a man with a spud in his hand, whom he took to be the head gardener, asked what he was doing there. He explained. 'Well,' said the man, 'jump over the wall and I'll show you the gardens.' Luckily he looked before he leaped, for there was a deep ditch on the other side. 'Oh, I forgot the ditch: you had better go to the door a couple of hundred yards farther on.' Here he was admitted, and shown over the flower-gardens and fruit-gardens, and hot-houses. Then the complaisant guide asked if he would not like to see the house and its contents. He admitted that he would like to do that above all things, but had heard of Mr. Beckford's exclusiveness, and would be sorry to get anybody into a scrape. 'That will be all right,' said the man, 'Mr. Beckford has known me all his life, and lets me do pretty well as I like here.' So into the house they went, and inspected pictures, statuary, armour, jewellery, and bric-à-brac of all kinds, until late in the afternoon, just as the visitor was wondering what sort of a tip he would be expected to give, the guide suddenly exclaimed—'Bless me! it's five o'clock. You must be hungry. Stop and have some dinner'—and the intruder discovered that he had been shown

over the house by Mr. Beckford himself. A magnificent dinner was duly served, on massive plate, and accompanied by the choicest wines. Afterwards candles were lighted, and the host conversed on subjects suggested by the surrounding objects, until a fine Louis Quatorze clock struck eleven. Mr. Beckford then rose and left the room, and the guest drew his chair to the fire to await his host's return. He must have dozed, for after a time he became aware that the room was in semi-darkness, and a solemn, powdered footman was putting out the lights. 'Where is Mr. Beckford?' he asked. 'Mr. Beckford has gone to bed,' said the man, as he extinguished the last candle. There was nothing for it but to follow the footman to the front door, which the flunkey opened wide as he said: 'Mr. Beckford ordered me to present his compliments to you, sir, and I am to say that, as you found your way into Fonthill without assistance, you may find your way out again as best you can; and he hopes you will take care to avoid the bloodhounds that are let loose in the gardens every night.' The door closed; and that uninvited guest climbed into the branches of the first tree he could find, and not till daylight came, and then keeping a sharp look out for the dogs, made his way out of the gardens and the park.

There was really nothing extraordinary in Beckford's way of life. Samuel Rogers, in his *Table Talk,* informs

us that he once stayed with Beckford at Fonthill for three days.

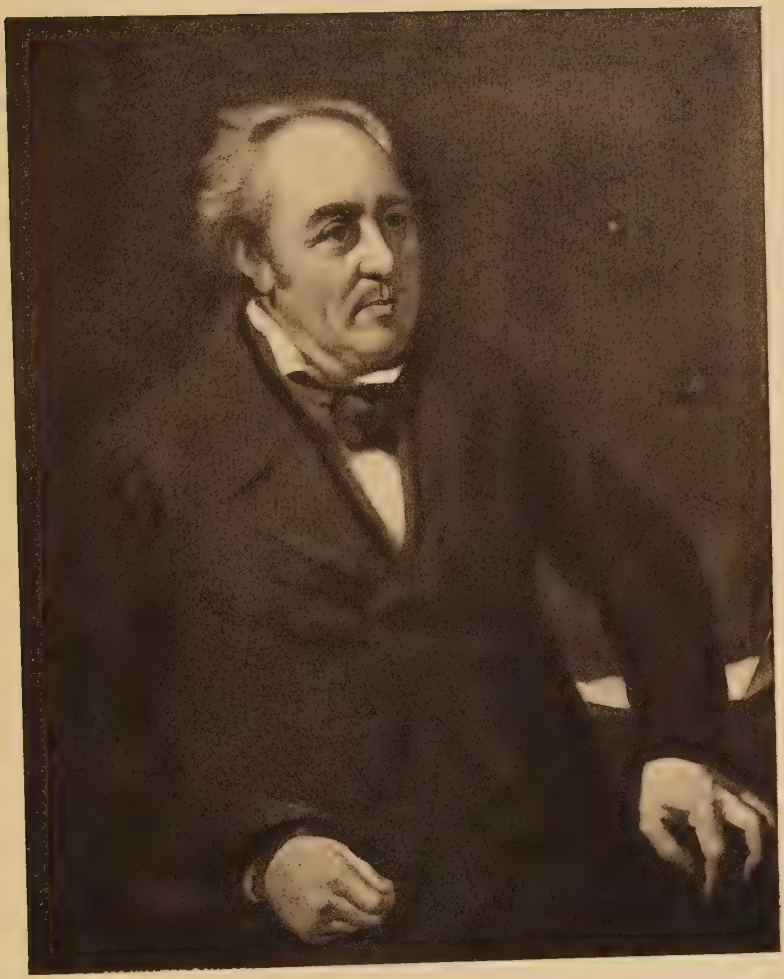
'On arriving at the gate [he says] I was informed that neither my servant nor my horses could be admitted, but that Mr. Beckford's attendants and horses should be at my service. The other visitors at that time were Smith (who published *Views in Italy*), and a French ecclesiastic, a very elegant and accomplished man. During the day we used to drive about the beautiful grounds in pony-chaises. In the evening Beckford would amuse us by reading one of his unpublished works; or he would extemporise on the pianoforte, producing the most novel and charming melodies (which, by the way, his daughter the Duchess of Hamilton, can do also).'

Altogether, Rogers says, he was more struck by the refinement than the magnificence of Fonthill. Beckford was an early riser; active and interested in all intellectual matters in a dilettante way; and a cultivated musician. He was attached to his servants, and could not bear to change them. He would never let his name appear in a public subscription, but he was nevertheless a generous man, and gave away much money in private. Compared with the modern type of plutocrat, who, after exhausting the possibilities of physical enjoyment, launches out into ostentatious and cynically selfish extravagance, with one eye steadily fixed on his own social advancement, Beckford may appear almost a respectable man—for a millionaire. His literary output was a small one; but perhaps more could not reasonably have been expected from one

who in his youth had inherited a hundred thousand a year and a million 'in ready money.' He remained in vigorous health to within a few days of his death, at the age of eighty-five, in 1844; and he was buried, by his own desire, in the garden of Lansdowne Tower.

'A CHILD OF ROME'

However we may account for the unpopularity of Landor's writings, and it is no very difficult matter to do this, it has always seemed to us strange that the public have shown so little interest in Landor, the man. There is a common complaint against the biographies of men of letters that they are, with few exceptions, insufferably dull reading. And the cause of this is not far to seek. If an author has put the best of himself into his books, he has, as a rule, left his biographer little to tell. All his adventures have probably been, like the Vicar of Wakefield's, by the fireside, all his migrations from the blue bed to the brown. No such complaint, however, can be made against the biography of Walter Savage Landor. The most exacting reader must admit that Mr. Forster had a very good story to tell—however much he may feel inclined to complain of the pompous manner in which that otherwise excellent biographer told it. Mr. Sidney Colvin has told the story more briefly, but more brightly, and with a tighter critical grasp, in his little volume of the *English Men of Letters* series. Few men—few men of letters, certainly—have been so happily circumstanced as Landor; few have done more



WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

From the painting by William Fisher, in the National Portrait Gallery.

to make shipwreck of their lives, and to bring disaster on all with whom they were connected.

'I never did a single wise thing,' are his own words, 'in the whole course of my existence, although I have written many which have been thought such.'

On the surface, Landor's character appears an odd mixture of opposing, and even mutually destructive, elements. A man of strong aristocratic sympathies, he had an unbounded hatred of tyranny and oppression in any form; a lover of peace and quiet meditation, his entire career was a series of contests; to a nature of such rare gentleness that he never plucked a flower, nor took a bird's nest, nor, after once finding a wounded bird, ever used his gun for sport, was joined an impetuosity and uncurbed vehemence that openly advocated tyrannicide, and could scarcely be restrained from challenging Lord John Russell for some fancied slight to a remote, and perhaps doubtful, ancestor. No man ever expressed greater confidence in himself, or had a profounder belief in the power and durability of his own work, yet, because a publisher refused to print *Count Julian*, he burned the manuscript of another tragedy he had in hand, and declared his intention to abandon poetry for ever. A professed follower of Epicurus, his whole life was destructive of happiness and peace. His temperament was too strong for his philosophy. He was removed from Rugby to save expulsion, was rusticated at Oxford, had quarrelled

with his father, and turned his back on the paternal home 'for ever,' before he had reached the age of twenty. Yet he was capable of great tenderness of feeling and of firm friendship. The two years that elapsed between the Rugby episode and his residence at Trinity College, Oxford, were passed in the house of Dr. Langley, of Ashbourne, between whom and his hot-headed pupil there sprang up a devoted attachment. Landor referred to this in after years in the most affectionate spirit. In the conversation of Izaak Walton, Cotton, and Oldways, Walton says of 'the good parson of Ashbourne,' whom Landor informs the reader, in a note, is the Dr. Langley of his schooldays: 'He wants nothing, yet he keeps the grammar-school, and is ready to receive, as private tutor, any young gentleman in preparation for Oxford or Cambridge: but only one. They live like princes, converse like friends, and part like lovers.'

Some good friends attempted a reconciliation with his family, and arrangements were ultimately made by which he received an allowance of £150 a year, with freedom to do as he pleased. The next three years were passed in reading, writing poetry, and making love, among the Welsh hills. Some experiments in journalism were made in London, chiefly at the instigation of the celebrated Dr. Parr, with whom acquaintance had been made; but Landor never had any serious thought of entering any of the professions, and

this, more than any other, would have been peculiarly distasteful to him. On his father's death he succeeded to a good property. His next experiment was of a military character. Roused to enthusiasm by the Spanish resistance to Napoleon, Landor started off to Spain, and proclaimed that he would equip at his own cost, and accompany to the field, a thousand volunteers. He did so, and while on the march with men to join Blake's army, took occasion to quarrel with the English envoy, Stuart. He saw no fighting, and, after the Convention of Cintra was signed, came home as filled with disgust as he had previously been with enthusiasm. In 1809 he bought the ruined priory and estate of Llanthony, having disposed of other property to assist him in the purchase. Here he proposed to live the life of a country gentleman. The building of a new mansion was commenced; the old ruins were to be reverently restored. Gangs of men were soon at work making roads and bridle-paths through the valley. Agriculture was to be raised to a high standard, sheep were imported from Segovia, and the surrounding country was to be made lovelier with plantations of Landor's favourite tree, the cedar of Lebanon. That he ought to live within the limits of his income was a notion that never occurred to Landor. While all this was going on, it chanced that he met a young lady at a ball in Bath, and as soon as he set eyes on her, exclaimed: 'By heaven! that's the prettiest girl in the room: I'll

marry her.' And marry her he did. Such was the precipitate action of the man who could philosophise on marriage thus :—

'Death itself to the reflecting mind is less serious than marriage. The elder plant is cut down that the younger may have room to flourish : a few tears drop into the loosened soil, and buds and blossoms spring over it. Death is not even a blow, is not even a pulsation ; it is a pause. But marriage unrolls the awful lot of numberless generations. Health, genius, honour, are the words inscribed on some ; on others are disease, fatuity, and infamy.'

The wife was many years younger than her husband, and the marriage proved anything but a happy one. For a little while, however, all went well. The young couple entertained guests at Llanthony, the first to come being Southey and his wife. Landor wrote a great deal of Latin verse, and published a volume of English poetry. Meantime, trouble was brewing among his tenants and neighbours. 'The earth contains no race of human beings so totally vile and worthless as the Welsh,' he writes, with characteristic vehemence. His chief trouble was caused by an English tenant, who had made use of Southey's name as an introduction ; a man who knew absolutely nothing of farming, and who leagued himself with the Welshmen to annoy and defraud their eccentric landlord. His rents were not paid, his game was poached, his cedar plantations were damaged, and, in a little while, he found himself involved in innumerable lawsuits. A local attorney

who had made himself peculiarly obnoxious he publicly thrashed, and the man brought a criminal action against him. In the course of a few years he had sunk a fortune in his Llanthony property, and when at last his suit for the recovery of two thousand pounds from the defaulting Englishman was decided in his favour, he was, financially, a ruined man. He determined to go abroad. His personal property was realised, and the Llanthony estate vested in trustees. His mother's life-charge entitled her to the position of chief creditor, and under her management the estate became more prosperous, and was made to yield Landor an income of something like sixteen hundred pounds a year. He desired to go to France: his wife disliked the plan, and objected. A quarrel ensued, during the progress of which she taunted him, in the presence of her sister, with the disparity of their years, with the result that next morning Landor set sail for France, in an oyster boat, alone. He believed they were parted for ever, and proposed to reserve for himself £160 a year, and make over all the rest of his income to his wife. In a little while, hearing that she had been very ill since their parting, and had suffered much on account of it, we find him writing her an affectionate letter: a reconciliation was effected, and she shortly joined her husband at Tours. In September 1815 they set out for Italy, and settled down for three years at Como. Here he passed a quiet time, making but few acquaintances, and seeing

no friends, except Southey, who came for a short visit in the summer of 1817. In 1818 his stay was brought to an abrupt close. An Italian poet, named Monti, had published some verses on England, which roused Landor's ire, and he printed some scurrilous Latin verses on Monti. Monti summoned him for libel. Landor thereupon wrote to threaten the magistrate with a thrashing, and for this was ordered to quit the country. He retired, at his leisure, and established himself at Pisa, which became his home for the next three years. We cannot wonder that the Italians failed to understand this imperious and eccentric Englishman. Strange stories about him were current among the people. He was believed to have challenged the Secretary of Legation for whistling in the street when Mrs. Landor passed; to have walked up to the judges in a court of justice, with a bag of dollars in his hand, asking how much was necessary to obtain him a favourable verdict; to have thrown his cook out of window, for neglect of a dinner, and while the man lay groaning on the ground with a broken limb, thrust his head out with the exclamation, 'Good God, I forgot the violets!'

At this time Landor was forty-six years of age, and as yet had produced none of the work which is most characteristic of his genius, and on which his fame as an English classic must rest. He had published *Gebir*, a narrative poem in blank verse; *Count Julian*, *a*

Tragedy, afterwards more correctly described as a series of dramatic scenes; one or two volumes of minor poems; some Latin verses, of interest to none but scholars; and a *Commentary on the Memoirs of Mr. Fox*, a book described by those who have seen it as a masterly performance, but withdrawn from circulation almost as soon as published.

Landor's title to notice, up to this date, was that he had been one of the leaders in the new movement of English poetry—the movement identified with the names of Wordsworth and Coleridge. *Gebir* appeared in the same year as the *Lyrical Ballads*, and, to any one able to read the signs of the times, bore as unmistakable evidence as they did that a new era of English poetry was at hand. Landor had gone back to the old masters of harmony, and had imbibed much of their music. Few people, nowadays, have read a line of the verse which was in fashion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, so we need make no apology for quoting a passage from Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper*, by way of specimen—and no unfavourable specimen—of the kind of thing that did duty for poetry in those days. A young lady, named Serena, has completed her toilet, and—

> 'Now in full charms descends the finished fair,
> For now the morning banquet claims her care;
> Already at the board with viands piled,
> Her sire impatient sits and chides his tardy child.

On his imperial lips rude hunger reigns,
And keener politics usurp his brains:
But when her love-inspiring voice he hears,
When the soft magic of her smile appears,
In that glad moment he at once forgets
His empty stomach, and the nation's debts:
He bends to nature's more divine controul,
And only feeds the father in his soul.
Quick to his hand behold her now present
The Indian liquor of celestial scent!
Not with more grace the nectar'd cup is given
By rose-lipp'd Hebe to the Lord of heaven.
While her fair hands a fresh libation pour,
Fashion's loud thunder shakes the sounding door,
The light Serena to the window springs,
On curiosity's amusive wings.'—

And so on. We may have some sympathy for Mr. Hayley, and more for his readers, when, after writing four cantos of this stuff, he exclaims, at the commencement of a fifth—

'Why art thou fled, O bless'd poetic time!
When fancy wrought the miracles of rhyme?'

A poetic time was coming, though Hayley knew it not, and Landor's *Gebir* was one among the first signs to herald the new birth. It is a poem in seven books, far from faultless, for the story is feeble, the transitions are abrupt, and the charge of obscurity, often made against Landor's writing, must be admitted here; but its style is lofty and harmonious, it contains innumerable fine, sonorous lines, and some pictures drawn with great delicacy and power. The sea-shell

lines have been so frequently cited, as though they were the only good ones Landor ever wrote, that we forbear to quote them. Take instead the picture of Charoba's bath. Sir Alma-Tadema should paint it.

'A bath of purest marble, purest wave,
On its fair surface bore its pavement high:
Arabian gold enchased the crystal roof,
With fluttering boys adorned and girls unrobed;
These, when you touch the quiet water, start
From their aërial sunny arch, and pant
Entangled 'mid each other's flowery wreaths,
And each pursuing is in turn pursued.
Here came at last, as ever wont at morn,
Charoba: long she lingered on the brink,
Often she sighed, and, naked as she was,
Sate down, and leaning on the couch's edge,
On the soft inward pillow of her arm
Rested her burning cheek: she moved her eyes;
She blusht; and blushing plunged into the wave.'

To any one but the British Matron, this must appear a very charming picture, drawn with all the grace and simplicity of Greek art. Gebir descends to the infernal regions, and the lines describing his approach thereto are finer than anything in English poetry since Milton:—

'A roar confused
Rose from a river rolling in its bed,
Not rapid, that would rouse the wretched souls;
Not calmly, that would lull them to repose.
But with dull weary lapses it upheaved
Billows of bale, heard low, yet heard afar.'

And so is the witch's call to Dalica, as she crosses the desert sands towards the ruined city of Masar :—

> 'Begone, nor tarry longer, or ere morn
> The cormorant in his solitary haunt
> Of insulated rock or sounding cove
> Stands on thy bleached bones and screams for prey!'

But we must not linger over Landor's poetry. Despite all its high qualities, it has not been, and is never likely to be, popular. The statuesque grace, definiteness of outline, and severe simplicity of presentment, which are the characteristics of Classic art, will never have that fascination for the mass of readers which is exercised by the vague suggestiveness, the mysterious magic, the accumulated wealth of adornment and colour, which are the characteristics of Romantic art.

Such, then, was Landor's work up to the end of 1820. The next eight years were passed in or near Florence, and during the whole of that time he was busily employed in writing his *Imaginary Conversations*. In this form of composition he had at last discovered a vehicle admirably adapted to his genius. The idea of writing dialogues was not altogether new to him. Twenty years earlier he had offered a dialogue between Burke and Grenville to the *Morning Chronicle*: it was not accepted, and from that time to this he does not appear to have repeated the experiment. Now, with characteristic impetuosity, he turned all his energy into this direction, and early

in 1822 had completed fifteen *Conversations*. These he sent off to Longmans' for publication. Some unaccountable delay in the delivery of the parcel caused him dire anxiety. He jumped to the conclusion that it was lost, burnt what he had since written, took to his bed, called himself a dead man, and, asserting his freedom to speak unreservedly of a dead man's work, declared that 'those conversations contained as forcible writing as exists on earth.' He had regained his composure, and was busy writing fresh dialogues, before the missing manuscript arrived at its destination, and the fact that Longmans' declined to publish it had then little effect on him. His friend Julius Hare took all the troublesome business off his hands, and finally arranged for its publication with Messrs. Taylor and Hessey. The book made some little stir among the critics, and was noticed at length by the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, and the *London*, reviews; the public received it with indifference. What Landor valued far more than popularity, however, was the praise of men like Southey and Wordsworth, and this was given ungrudgingly. The subjects treated in these conversations are of various kinds, and the interlocutors are of all ages and countries. There is no connection between the dialogues other than the boards between which they are bound, and there is slight pretence, if any, that the opinions expressed were really those of the persons to whom they are

attributed. Landor does, indeed, stipulate that no opinion is to be taken as his own unless expressed in his name; but it is evident, on the face of it, that Cicero and Horne Tooke, Pericles and Roger Ascham, Sir Philip Sidney and Demosthenes, are only so many mouthpieces for the writer's own thoughts on poetry, morality, eloquence, spelling, literature, life, and death.

Whatever may have been thought of the opinions of the book, one thing ought to have been evident: a new prose writer of the first magnitude had arisen in the literary firmament. So copious a stream of faultless English, of high and sustained eloquence, carrying along in its stately flow weighty and dignified judgments on men and things in general, was not to be matched by any living writer. Here, too, was a man who came forward with none of the assumed humility and diffidence of the ordinary scribe, but who spoke with a voice of authority, calmly demanding the acknowledgment of his place among those who are not for an age, but for all time. 'What I write,' he says, 'is not written on slate, and no finger, not of Time himself, who dips it in the clouds of years, can efface it.' The writing of more dialogues proceeded rapidly, and before 1829 he had published five volumes, containing about eighty 'Conversations,' comprising all those that were given to the public before the first collected edition of his works, which appeared in 1846.

Landor professed to expect no popularity for any of his writings. With the sublime egoism of Bacon, he left his fame to the next age, and among his contemporaries courted only 'fit audience, though few.' What he had written he believed to be durable as marble, but he thought it above the reach of the vulgar mind—the vulgar mind being with him a very comprehensive term, including all but some thirty minds in each generation. 'I shall dine late,' he says; 'but the dining-room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select.' In regard to this, as in most things, however, he was not free from inconsistency, and we may reasonably suspect him of cherishing some hopes in another direction. Time after time, heedless of repeated experience, he had publicly devoted the (purely imaginary) profits of a publication to some charitable purpose, and, after the appearance of *Gebir*, he confessed that even if foolish man had cared for the poem, he would have persevered in a poetic career, seeing that 'there is something of summer in the hum of insects.'

Professor Dowden sums up Landor's position with the remark that 'he had no great authentic word of the Lord to utter,' and we must admit this to be true. He was an Epicurean; holding, indeed, that abstinence from low pleasures is the only means of meriting or of obtaining the higher, but quite content to take his share of the goods the gods provide us,

without troubling his mind overmuch about things beyond. He was never bowed down by 'the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world'; like Goethe, he believed the mystery of existence to be insoluble, but, unlike Goethe, he did not think man was nevertheless bound to attempt it, so that he may know how to keep within the limits of the knowable. He held it to be the proper business of religion and philosophy to promote human happiness, and leave obscurer problems alone. Thus Diogenes is made to reply to Plato:—

'I meddle not at present with infinity or eternity; when I can comprehend them, I will talk about them. You metaphysicians kill the flower-bearing and fruit-bearing glebe with delving, and turning over, and sifting, and never bring up any solid and malleable mass from the dark profundity in which you labour. The intellectual world, like the physical, is inapplicable to profit and cultivation a little way below the surface.'

And again:—

'This is philosophy, to make remote things tangible, common things extensively useful, useful things extensively common, and to leave the least necessary for the last. Truth is not reasonably the main and ultimate object of philosophy; philosophy should seek truth merely as the means of acquiring and propagating happiness.'

Many of the dialogues deal with politics, but beyond an ardent love of liberty, and a hatred of all forms of despotism, there is nothing in Landor's political creed

deserving of notice. He was a hero-worshipper, and his heroes were mostly those of the ancient world. Democracy he detested, and the needs and conditions of modern political societies his mind failed to grasp. Consecutive reasoning of any kind he was incapable of; his power and charm lie in the abundance of his great but isolated thoughts, and the noble aspirations with which his heart was filled, expressed, as these always are, in language of unrivalled delicacy and force. No writing is more quotable than Landor's, yet, strange to say, no writer is so seldom quoted. The reader continually comes across sentences like the following, arising naturally and with no appearance of effort, in the course of a conversation.

'Those who are quite satisfied, sit still and do nothing; those who are not quite satisfied, are the sole benefactors of the world.'

'There is no funeral so sad to follow as the funeral of our own youth, which we have been pampering with fond desires, ambitious hopes, and all the bright berries that hang in poisonous clusters over the path of life.'

'The noble mansion is most distinguished by the beautiful images it retains of beings passed away: and so is the noble mind.'

'How many who have abandoned for public life the studies of poetry and philosophy, may be compared to brooks and rivers, which in the beginning of their course have assuaged our thirst, and have invited us to tranquillity by their bright resemblance of it, and which afterwards partake the nature of

that vast body whereinto they run, its dreariness, its bitterness, its foam, its storms, its everlasting noise and commotion.'

'The sweetest souls, like the sweetest flowers, soon canker in cities, and no purity is rarer than the purity of delight.'

'We may enjoy the present while we are insensible of infirmity and decay: but the present, like a note in music, is nothing but as it appertains to what is past and what is to come. There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the grave: there are no voices, O Rhodopè, that are not soon made mute, however tuneful: there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last.'

The dramatic quality of Landor's dialogues is very unequal. In some cases nothing would be lost to the reader if any other name were substituted for that of the supposed speaker, while in many we are conscious of nothing but the strident tones of the irascible and dogmatic author himself. But some exhibit a very high degree of power. The scene between Henry VIII. and his discarded wife, Anne Boleyn; the conversation between Essex and Spenser; the charming dialogue of Tancredi and Constantia, and that between Leofric and Godiva, to name no others, show the true dramatic artist at his best, and are instinct with beauty and pathos.

Landor's most obvious defects, as shown in the characters of his *Conversations*, are want of humour, incapacity for sustained reasoning, and inability to tell a good story. His attempts at the humorous and at

story-telling are certainly productive of laughter, but we laugh at, and not with, him.

Landor's residence in the Palazzo Medici was brought to a close in characteristic fashion. His friend Mr. Kirkup writes the following account of it to Mr. Forster :—

'I remember one day, when he lived in the Medici Palace, he wrote to the Marquis and accused him of having seduced away his coachman. The Marquis, I should tell you, enjoyed no very good name, and this exasperated Landor the more. Mrs. Landor was sitting in the drawing-room the day after, where I and some others were, when the Marquis came strutting in without removing his hat. But he had scarcely advanced three steps from the door when Landor walked up to him and quickly knocked his hat off, then took him by the arm and turned him out. You should have heard Landor's shout of laughter at his own anger when it was all over, inextinguishable laughter which none of us could resist. Immediately after he sent the Marquis warning by the hands of a policeman, which is reckoned an affront, and quitted his house at the end of the year.'

A fresh house was found for him, and dialogue-writing and picture-buying proceeded as before. Visitors were fairly plentiful in those days. His chief associates were Mr. Kirkup and Charles Armitage Brown, the friend of Keats, who both lived in Florence. Hither also came Francis Hare, Hogg, Leigh Hunt, and Hazlitt, and his good friends Lord and Lady Blessington, with Count D'Orsay. From Mr. Ablet, a Welsh gentleman of fortune, who visited him about this time,

Landor subsequently received a substantial proof of friendship. He was looking about him for a new house, and Mr. Ablet insisted on advancing the money for him to buy the Villa Gherardesca, a fine house, with splendid grounds, which stood on a height just below Fiesole, a spot made famous by Landor's favourite author Boccaccio. He surrounded himself with a cloud of pictures, some good, some worthless. He had conceived a great admiration for the pre-Raphaelite masters who are now so fashionable, but his judgment was far from infallible, and the Florentine picture-dealers did not scruple to take advantage of him. The year 1833 brought Lord Houghton (then Mr. Monckton Milnes) to stay some weeks at the Villa Gherardesca; and he has drawn a very charming picture of the old lion, of his stately and agreeable presence, his complimentary old-world manners, of his elegant though simple hospitality, of his 'conversation so affluent, animated, and coloured, so rich in knowledge and illustration, so gay and yet so weighty—such bitter irony and such lofty praise, uttered with a voice fibrous in all its tones, whether gentle or fierce'—and of his laughter 'so pantomimic, yet so genial, rising out of a momentary silence into peals so cumulative and sonorous, that all contradiction and possible affront were merged for ever.' Emerson also came, and found him noble and courteous, the most patient and gentle of hosts.

His literary activity never flagged. In 1834 appeared the *Examination of Shakspeare*, of which Charles Lamb said there were only two men who could have written it—he who did write it, or he on whom it was written. We find it difficult to believe that Lamb was serious when he said this, for the *Examination* appears to us as disappointing a failure as ever was penned. The difficulties of the subject were enormous, and Landor's powers were not of the kind to successfully cope with them. Sir Leslie Stephen must have had the *Examination* in his mind when he confessed that Landor often bored him. Its wit is so cumbrous, its humour—to put it mildly—so un-Shakspearian, and its story so feeble, that no number of fine sayings and harmonious periods avail to make it anything but a weariness and vexation of spirit to the reader.

Pericles and Aspasia, his next book, was a happier effort.

> 'Through the trumpet of a child of Rome
> Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.'

It is impossible, in our limited space, to give any idea of the book. Suffice it to say that Landor is here at his best. Nowhere is the beauty of his style more manifest, nowhere are the richness and compass of his mind more abundantly displayed, than in this storehouse of noble thoughts and splendid illustrations. Yet his publisher lost money by it, as he did, also, by the *Pentameron*, which appeared in the following year.

Here again Landor reached his high-water mark. We can imagine no greater treat, for one even slightly familiar with Italian literature, who loves Petrarch and Boccaccio, and can forgive some hard sayings against Dante, than to lie a whole summer's day, under some shady tree, with the *Pentameron* for his only companion.

The year that saw the publication of the *Pentameron* witnessed Landor's banishment from his home and from Italy. Discord had been growing in his household. The little rift within the lute had been gradually widening, and now the music ceased altogether. One can readily believe that Landor was no man easy to live with ; and so far as we can gather, his wife never made any but the feeblest attempts to keep matters smooth and pleasant. The immediate cause of the disruption appears to have been Mrs. Landor's repeated remonstrances with her husband in the presence of their children. This, to a temperament like Landor's, was intolerable, and he conceived it to be as demoralising to the children as it was humiliating to himself. In the spring of 1835, therefore, he parted with them all, and travelled slowly to England. After a short time spent in visiting his friends, in various parts of the country, he made over the bulk of his fortune to his wife and children, reserving £400 a year for himself, and settled down at Bath.

At Bath Landor soon became a conspicuous figure.

Somebody had given him a pretty Pomeranian dog, and many people still remember the venerable and stately but ill-dressed old gentleman, with his Olympian laughter, who was to be daily seen walking about the neighbourhood of that pleasant place, with the little companion that perpetually barked and gambolled about him. His literary activity continued unimpaired, as the *Hellenics*, additional *Dialogues*, *Last Fruits*, and *Dry Sticks*, sufficiently attest. He still bought pictures, and the picture-dealers of Bath proved no whit more scrupulous than those of Florence. It seemed that the autumn of this stormy life was destined to pass in retirement and peace. Landor's habit was to breakfast at nine, write or meditate till noon, and dine at two, alone or with a single friend. He always had a hatred of dinner-parties. He makes Epicurus, in one of the *Dialogues*, say—

'Dinner is a less gratification to me than to many. I dine alone, to avoid the noise, the heat, and the intermixture both of odours and of occupations. I cannot bear the indecency of speaking with a mouth in which there is food. I careen my body (since it is always in want of repair) in as unobstructed a space as I can, and I lie down and sleep when the work is over.'

The evening, after a frugal tea, he devoted to reading. For twenty years this was the round of his daily life; varied by an occasional run to London, or a visit from his friends Dickens and Forster. Old friends were dying around him, one by one, Southey, Francis Hare,

Ablet; and he had to supply their place, so far as might be, with those of a generation younger than his own. 'When Death calls me,' said the old man, looking calmly to the end, 'he shall find me ready.' On his seventy-fifth birthday he produced the following quatrain, and read it aloud before breakfast:—

> 'I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
> Nature I loved, and, next to nature, art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart.'

A year or two before this a dialogue of his, between Alfieri and Metastasio, appeared in *Fraser*, on which Carlyle wrote to Mr. Forster: 'Do you think the grand old Pagan wrote that piece just now? The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians! The unsubduable old Roman!'

But the peaceful life at Bath was doomed to an abrupt and melancholy end. Landor had somehow been dragged into a quarrel between two ladies, both of whom had been very kind and attentive to the old man, until the elder of the two made calumnious insinuations respecting the other's intimacy with him. The old fierce spirit flamed out, he sent libellous letters to the lady's husband, and fulminated his wrath both in writing and in print. Legal proceedings were instituted, and resulted in a verdict of £1000 damages against Landor. Before the trial came on he had a

stroke of paralysis, and hung between life and death for some weeks. But the 'unsubduable old Roman' recovered, and, acting on the advice of his friends, sold his personal property, made over his real estate to his eldest son, and returned to Fiesole, which he had left twenty-three years before. Some of his old friends at Florence appeared to treat him coldly, on account of the Bath scandal. To one of these, Lord Normanby, he penned the following curious and characteristic document :—

'My Lord,—Now I am recovering from an illness of several months' duration, aggravated no little by your lordship's rude reception of me at the Cascine, in presence of my family and innumerable Florentines, I must remind you in the gentlest terms of the occurrence.

'We are both of us old men, my lord, and are verging on decrepitude and imbecility, else my note might be more energetic. I am not inobservant of distinctions. You by the favour of a Minister are Marquis of Normanby, I by the grace of God am Walter Savage Landor.'

This, however, was one of the least of his troubles. His family seem to have made no effort to accommodate him, or even to let the old man's last days pass in peace, in the place he loved so well. He made one or two attempts to live alone in Florence, but they brought him back. At last he went to the house of Mr. Robert Browning, and declared that nothing should induce him to return to live under the same roof with his family. Mr. Browning wrote to Landor's

brothers in England, and arrangements were at once made to supply him with a sufficient income for his remaining years. In the society of the Brownings, and of the American sculptor-poet, Story, he was considerate, gentle, easily satisfied; and to them the elaborate old-world courtesy of his manners, and the occasional bursts of his energetic and brilliant conversation, were an unalloyed delight. Five years of uninterrupted quiet were thus passed; his chief amusements being novel-reading, writing a poem or two in Latin or English, and petting, or playfully quoting the sage opinions of his dog 'Giallo.' But at eighty-eight the old force had not entirely deserted him, as was proved by some new dramatic scenes, which might well have been the productions of a man in the prime of his powers. A few lines from the preface to his *Heroic Idyls*, published in 1863, might almost serve him for an epitaph.

'He who is within two paces of his ninetieth year may sit down and make no excuses; he must be unpopular, he never tried to be much otherwise; he never contended with a contemporary, but walked alone on the far eastern uplands, meditating and remembering.'

Landor was endowed with a grand and singularly imposing personality. He was, as Mr. Carlyle called him, 'a grand old Pagan'; his talk was Olympian—thunder and lightning as of gods; his temper elemental, eruptive, volcanic. Wealth, position, great attain-

ments, noble thoughts, a splendid genius, all were his; and all were blurred and disfigured, and the fabric of his life shattered, by the demon of discord.

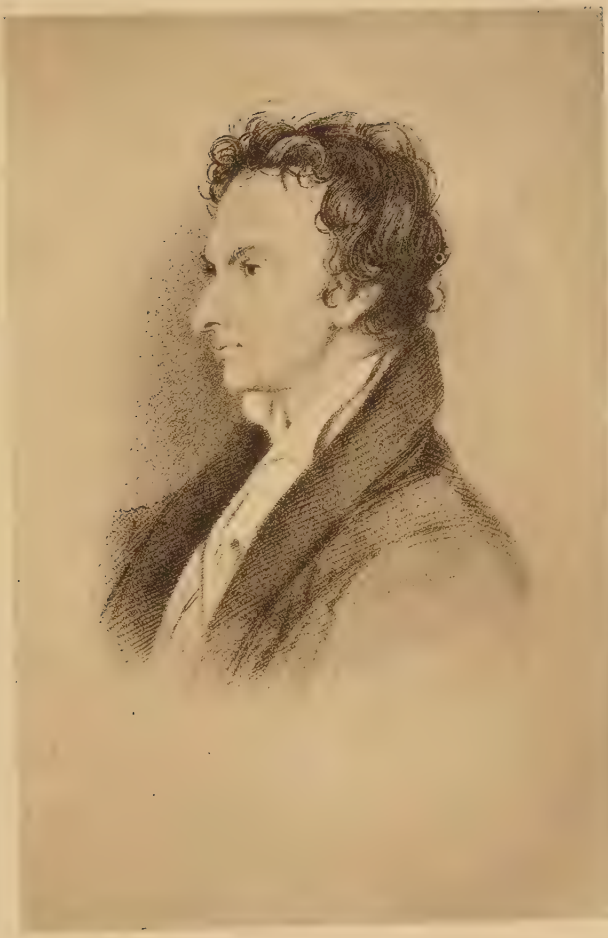
To the general reader, Landor is most accessible in Mr. Sidney Colvin's excellent monograph, and the volume of selections from his writings in Messrs. Macmillan's 'Golden Treasury Series.' His life and writings, in Mr. Forster's collected edition, published in 1876, fill eight bulky volumes. The subjects treated of are almost as various as the phases of human life; and, although he is occasionally crotchety, and sometimes even laboured and dull, there are few matters of interest to the student of literature that his genius has not in some way illuminated.

For weighty aphorisms, apposite illustrations, brilliant metaphors, or biting sarcasms, Landor's writings are a mine of wealth to him who is willing to dig for these things; while his sedate, forceful, and almost faultless style place him in the front rank of the masters of English prose.

The reader who wishes to make a first acquaintance with Landor may be recommended to commence with the dialogues between Leofric and Godiva, Essex and Spenser, and Æsop and Rhodopè; if he fails to appreciate the beauty of these, let him pray without ceasing for a purer taste, and a deeper insight into the more delicate feelings and higher aspirations of the human heart.

A PRINCE OF CRITICS

It is not altogether easy to see why the writings of William Hazlitt have had such a limited degree of popularity. A large proportion of his work consists of vigorous criticism of English literature and of the makers thereof; and the general public, as a rule, much prefers reading a book about any of its great writers to studying the author's works at first-hand. Moreover, Hazlitt's performances in this direction are amongst the best things of their kind; and, at any rate since his death, have been ungrudgingly praised by brother experts. Thackeray said of him that he had 'a wit so keen, a sensibility so exquisite, an appreciation of humour or pathos, or even of the greatest art, so lively, quick, and cultivated, that it was always good to know what were the impressions made by books, or men, or pictures, on such a mind.' And he added that, as there were probably not a dozen men in England with powers so varied, all the rest of the world should rejoice to listen to the opinions of so accomplished a critic. Professor Saintsbury calls him 'the greatest critic that England has yet produced': and Dr. Garnett, after describing his literary



WILLIAM HAZLITT.
By W. Bewick.

criticisms as masterpieces of ingenious and felicitous exposition, goes on to say that 'as an essayist he is even more effective than as a critic.'

Hazlitt's own account of the reason for his unpopularity is simply that he refused to become 'a Government tool.' That alone caused him to be followed with one continuous cry of abuse from the beginning of his career to the end. He had endeavoured, he says, to guide the taste of the English people to the best old English writers; but he had also said that English kings did not reign by right divine; and after that, no loyal subject would look into Webster or Decker, because he had pointed them out. He had done something (more than any one except Schlegel, he declares) to vindicate the characters of Shakespeare's plays from the stigma of French criticism; but the Anti-Jacobin and Anti-Gallican writers soon found out that he had also said and written that neither Frenchmen nor Englishmen were slaves by birthright, and that was enough to damn the work. He had written *Table-Talks* without number, and could swear (were they not his) that the thoughts in many of them were founded as the rock, free as air, the tone like an Italian picture. 'What then? Had the style been like polished steel, as firm and as bright, it would have availed me nothing, for I am not a Government tool!' All this—and there is a good deal more in the same style—reads very oddly to us at this day,

and we are inclined to set the whole of it down to mere personal pique. But in the opinion of several of his friends it is a true enough account of the matter. The constant obloquy of the hostile dominant political party, we are told, pressed down his reputation; and Barry Cornwall, writing towards the close of his own life, laments that no one has taken the trouble to elevate it to its proper position since. When all necessary deductions are made from the value of Hazlitt's voluminous writings there remains so much which is of the highest order of merit, and the man himself is so extremely interesting a psychological study, that one cannot but wonder to find him merely the favourite of a few experts, and generally neglected by the reading public.

William Hazlitt, who was born in Maidstone on April 10, 1778, came of a rigid Dissenting stock. His father was a Unitarian minister from County Antrim, who had been contemporary with Adam Smith at Glasgow University, knew Benjamin Franklin, and corresponded with Dr. Priestley. After various wanderings, including a visit to America, where he founded the first Unitarian church in Boston, after the conclusion of the war, in 1783, Hazlitt senior settled down as Unitarian minister at the little village of Wem, in Shropshire. Here the children were brought up according to the strictest sect of their religion on Neale's *History of the Puritans*; and

indoctrinated with those principles of civil and religious liberty which the old Dissenters fought for as their very life. Literature seems to have been represented by nothing much lighter than the huge folios of Prijescovius, Crellius, Cracovius, and other books of controversial divinity which were to be found on the shelves of the father's library. It was an odd cradle for the artistic temperament, which all the surviving children of the Rev. Mr. Hazlitt seem to have inherited—probably from some remote ancestor. John, the eldest, became a miniature-painter of some note, and exhibited for many years at the Royal Academy. Peggy, the sister, was a good flower-painter, and gave indications that, if properly trained, she would have become a competent artist. And the darling, though frustrated, ambition of young William's life was to leave to posterity something not unworthy of comparison with Titian or Rembrandt. Yet to his dying day he retained in heart and mind a lifelike and fond remembrance of what he describes as the supremely happy days of childhood at Wem.

'If I see a row of cabbage-plants,' he says, 'or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those I used so carefully to water of an evening at Wem, when my day's tasks were done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning's sun. Again, I never see a child's kite in the air, but it seems to pull at my heart. It is to me "a thing of life." I feel the twinge at my elbow, the flutter and palpitation with which

I used to let go the string of my own, as it rode in the air and towered among the clouds.'

It was his father's wish that William should become a Dissenting minister, and at the age of fifteen he was sent to the Unitarian College at Hackney. But the ministry had little charm for him, and the project was soon abandoned. At the age of eighteen he fancied himself a metaphysician, believed he had made certain discoveries concerning the natural disinterestedness of the human mind, and made the first draft of an essay on the *Principles of Human Action*, a little treatise which he completed and published eight years later, and to which, all his life, he attached an extravagant value. The year 1798 was the turning-point of his life, and he recurs to it again and again. In the celebrated essay entitled *My first Acquaintance with Poets*, he has related how he got up before day-break one cold, raw morning in the winter of that year, and walked ten miles in the mud to hear Coleridge preach. He could not have been more delighted, he declares, if he had heard the music of the spheres. Shortly after this, Coleridge paid a visit to the father's house at Wem, when he took kindly notice of the shy young enthusiast, and encouraged him to write. On leaving, Coleridge invited him to pay a visit to Nether-Stowey; whereat, he says, he was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy in *Cassandra* when he saw a thunderbolt fall close at

his feet. But he did not fail to go, was duly introduced to Wordsworth, and privileged to hear some of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were yet in manuscript. Then it was, he tells us, that the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over him; and he owed to Coleridge that his understanding did not remain dumb and brutish.

Until the age of twenty-four he appears to have lived at Wem with his father, studying in his own desultory way; but finances were strictly limited, and it was necessary that William should find some way of earning his living. Accordingly he came up to London, to his brother's house, for an induction into the rudiments of painting, and was then sent off to Paris, to study in the Louvre; helping to pay his expenses by making certain sketches, and copies of old masters, for which his brother had obtained commissions in London. He tells us that his first initiation into the mysteries of art was at the Orleans Gallery. But a short time before he had been reading *The Provoked Husband* with the highest relish, with a green, woody landscape of Ruysdael or Hobbima before him, at which he occasionally glanced, wondering what there could be in that sort of work to satisfy and delight the mind; at the same time asking himself, as a speculative question, whether he should ever feel an interest in it such as that he now took in reading Vanbrugh and Cibber. But at the Orleans

Gallery, he avers, a mist passed away from his sight, and the scales fell from his eyes. He came back from Paris in 1803, says his grandson, with a number of copies of the old masters in his portfolio, and a set of formed predilections in his head, very few of which he afterwards even modified, much less forsook. A professional tour in England as a portrait-painter was next undertaken, and the first head he tried to paint was that of an old woman with the upper part of her face shaded by her bonnet; he worked at this with great perseverance, trying to make it like an old head by Rembrandt which he had seen in the picture gallery at Burleigh House. 'If I could produce a head at all like Rembrandt in a year, in my life-time,' he cries, 'it would be glory and felicity and wealth and fame enough for me!' Theoretically, this is very well, but practically he was so impatient of his own progress that when unable to produce a desired effect, he has been known to cut the canvas into ribbons in his passion. Northcote was of opinion that, had he persevered, he would have become a great painter; but he was discouraged at the result of his own efforts, and although he afterwards professed that he would rather be a humble painter like Jan Steen or Gerard Dow than the greatest casuist or philologer that ever lived, he now abandoned all thought of being an artist. If, however, he was never to be able to say, with Correggio, 'I also am a painter,' the technical

knowledge which he thus acquired was invaluable to him afterwards, when he turned to the criticism of art, in which, according to competent judges, he was only less happy than in the criticism of literature.

How Hazlitt managed to earn a living during the next few years is not very clear; but in 1806 we find him publishing *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs* at his own expense. In 1807 he abridged Tucker's *Light of Nature Revealed*, condensing the seven volumes into one, and adding an excellent preface; wrote a reply to Malthus's *Essay on Population*; and edited the *Eloquence of the British Senate*, a book of specimens with powerfully-drawn characters of the principal orators. And in 1808 he made an imprudent, and what proved to be a disastrous, marriage. The lady was two years his senior, and was the sister of a Dr. Stoddart, whom he had met at his brother's house in London. She had a small property at Winterslow, in Wiltshire, worth about £150 a year, and this her brother, to Hazlitt's disgust, insisted on having settled upon herself. Hazlitt's grandson prints a number of letters from Mary Lamb to Miss Sarah Stoddart, from which it appears that this lady, immediately previous to her marriage with Hazlitt, had had a whole series of love affairs. Mary writes to her friend to say 'God bless you, and may you be happy together,' on so many different occasions, and concerning so many different swains, that one almost

comes to feel that the words must be of evil omen. At present, however, there were no stormclouds in the sky, and the young couple went to a cottage on Mrs. Hazlitt's property at Winterslow. Here, in 1809, a son was born, and named William, after his father and grandfather, but he only survived six months. And here the Lambs, with Martin Burney and Colonel Phillips, came on their historic visit, and stayed a month, paying for their board and lodging. The domestic interior of the Hazlitts' always makes a curious picture, whether in the country or in town. On this occasion Mary Lamb writes to her dear Sarah as follows:—

'Martin says if you can borrow a blanket or two, he can sleep on the floor without bed or mattress, which would save his expenses at the Hut, for if Phillips breakfasts there, he must do so too, which would swallow up all his money. And he and I have calculated that, if he has no inn expenses, he may as well spare that money to give you for a part of his roast beef. We can spare you also just five pounds. You are not to say this to Hazlitt, lest his delicacy should be alarmed; but I tell you what Martin and I have planned, that if you happen to be empty-pursed at this time, you may think it as well to make him up a bed in the best kitchen.'

The Lambs enjoyed their visit thoroughly. They had sunshiny weather, and daily walks of from eight to twenty miles; saw Wilton, Salisbury, and Stonehenge, and crossed the country to Oxford. Hazlitt says the country people thought Lamb an oddity, and

that he did not say much or make a single joke all the while he stayed there; but when they went to Oxford, he and the old colleges were 'hail-fellow, well met,' and in the quadrangles he 'walked gowned.'

The following year, after the birth of another son, also named William, the Hazlitts removed to London, and rented from Jeremy Bentham a house in York Street, Westminster, which was said to have been the abode of Milton. Hazlitt opened his London campaign with a series of lectures at the Royal Institution on the English philosophers and metaphysicians. He secured an appointment as Parliamentary reporter to the *Morning Chronicle*, but he was not a good shorthand writer, and the work was otherwise unsuitable for him, so that he was glad when opportunity offered to exchange it for the post of theatrical critic on the same paper. In 1814 he began to write for the *Examiner* and for the *Champion*. In the same year he was asked by Jeffrey to do something for the *Edinburgh Review*, and a criticism of Dunlop's *History of Fiction* was the first of the nineteen or twenty articles which he contributed to the great Whig organ. In 1815 Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* commenced a series of papers called *The Round Table*, to which, during two years, Hazlitt contributed no less than thirty-five essays. The best of these were afterwards collected and reprinted in two small volumes bearing the same title. Throughout the year 1816 he was busy on his

Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, which on its appearance in 1817 was favourably noticed in the *Edinburgh Review*, and sold so well that the first edition was exhausted within six weeks. A second edition was in course of preparation when the *Quarterly* attacked both book and author, and the sale immediately fell dead. A second attack, not long afterwards, roused Hazlitt's indignation to white heat, and he produced a scathing letter, of eighty-seven printed pages, addressed to William Gifford, Esqre., by way of exposing 'the wretched cavillings, wilful falsehoods, and omissions, and servile malignity,' of that gentleman and his review. Many critics hold that this letter to Gifford contains the finest, most vigorous, eloquent, and epigrammatic prose that Hazlitt ever wrote. Certainly the quarrels of authors have seldom produced eighty-seven pages of better reading.

In 1818, 1819, and 1821, Hazlitt delivered his three courses of lectures on 'The English Poets,' on 'The English Comic Writers,' and on 'The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,' at the Surrey Institution. Mr. P. G. Patmore, Secretary of the Institution, states that when Hazlitt, as a perfect stranger, made a proposal to him for the first series on the English Poets, he confessed that he had not written a line of a single lecture. Yet he asked for a substantial payment in advance! Of the third series, Barry Cornwall, by way of showing how quick a perception Hazlitt had of the beauties

and defects of books, tells the following equally significant story :—

'When he was about to write his *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb and to myself, who were supposed by many to be well acquainted with these ancient writers. I lent him about a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hut, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written. And he then appeared to comprehend the character and merits of the old writers more thoroughly than any other person, although he had so lately entered upon the subject.'

Dr. Johnson's dictum, that these old writers 'were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce had they been much esteemed,' was still accepted, and Hazlitt's first business was to show that these old writers had live blood circulating in their veins. His brief was to exhibit the sweetness of Decker, the thought of Marston, the grace of Fletcher, the pathos of Webster, the deep design of Marlowe; to show that nature lay open to these old writers like a book, and that they were fine and bold and true, in their descriptions of it. And it is with their delineations of character that he is mainly concerned. Speaking of Decker's Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, he says, 'We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise,

revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value if we had not known them always: they are old, very old, acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within "the red-leaved tablets of our hearts."'

Hazlitt's lectures were all written, and he read them exactly as they were written; but, whatever may be said of the matter, the manner of its delivery appears to have been unsatisfactory. His elocution was not sufficiently varied; and the oddness of his appearance must frequently have detracted from the effectiveness of his remarks. Hazlitt was habitually negligent of his dress. Lamb hints that besides something of a better temper, he had need of a smoother head of hair. The untidiness of the house in York Street was on a par with the personal untidiness of its master—and, to say truth, of its mistress also. Hazlitt's study was a big, wainscoted room, with two windows, containing a mantlepiece which was a fine, high, old-fashioned piece of architecture. But the only use he could find for an ornament like this was to cover it with hieroglyphical memoranda for future essays, as if it were of no more value than a note-book. Haydon, in his autobiography, gives no very inviting picture of the domestic arrangements of the Hazlitts. He was asked to the christening of their second son :—

'Hazlitt then lived in Milton's House, Westminster, next

door to Bentham. At four I came, but he was out. I walked up, and found his wife ill by the fire, in a bed-gown—nothing ready for guests, and everything wearing the appearance of neglect and indifference. I said, "Where is Hazlitt?" "Oh dear, William has gone to look for a parson." "A parson? Why, has he not thought of that before?" "No, he didn't." "I'll go and look for him," said I; and out I went into the Park, through Queen's Square, and met Hazlitt in a rage coming home. "Have you got a parson?" "No, sir; these fellows are all out." "What will you do?" "Nothing."'

Haydon goes on to say that nothing was done. The company came, and there was some good talk, but no christening.

Nobody seemed much surprised when, after a few years of this domestic bliss, Hazlitt and his wife quietly agreed to live apart, he taking furnished lodgings in London, and frequently running down to Winterslow Hut for a spell of thinking or writing. His biographer says there never can have been a worse assorted couple; and, without much blaming either of them, he attributes their separation to sheer want of sympathy and incompatibility of temper. But in 1822, Hazlitt complicated matters by falling in love with the daughter of his lodging-house keeper, Sarah Walker. To unprejudiced observers this girl appeared to be a commonplace, unintellectual, silent, demure young woman, with a small round face and expressionless eyes; but to Hazlitt she seemed a being full of

witchery, full of grace, full of tenderness, and his fancy invested her with all the attractions of a divinity. His friends charitably assumed that he was suffering from a fit of temporary insanity. He abandoned his literary work as an idle matter, pestered everybody he met with his outpourings about her beauty, her love, her deceit, her devotedness, or his despair; and for a time could neither talk nor write about anything else. Romeo, *ætat.* forty-four, raving about an inamorata, whose charms were as shadowy as those of Don Quixote's Dulcinea del Toboso, does not make a pretty picture. Barry Cornwall relates that, on his own confession, Hazlitt would sometimes tell the story of his infatuation to five different persons in the same day.

'"I am a cursed fool," said he to me. "I saw J—— going into Wills' Coffee-House yesterday morning. He spoke to me. I followed him into the house, and whilst he lunched I told him the whole story. Then I wandered into the Regent's Park, where I met one of M——'s sons. I walked with him some time, and on his using some civil expression, by Jove, sir, I told him the whole story!" [Here he mentioned another instance which I forget.] "Well, sir," he went on, "I then went and called on Haydon, but he was out. There was only his man, Salmon, there; but, by Jove! I could not help myself. It all came out; the whole cursed story. Afterwards I went to look at some lodgings in Pimlico. The landlady at one place, after some explanations as to rent, etc., said to me very kindly: "I am afraid you are not well, sir." "No, madam," I said, "I am not well";

and on inquiring further, the devil take me if I did not let out the whole story from beginning to end.'

Mrs. Hazlitt knew all that was going on, but instead of showing resentment, she agreed to obtain a divorce according to Scotch law, so that they might go their separate ways unhampered by one another. For this purpose it was necessary that they should both spend a few months in Edinburgh; and Mrs. Hazlitt's journal, from which some extraordinary quotations are made in the memoir by her grandson, gives some idea of the very business-like character of the transaction. They occupied separate lodgings, but she called upon him occasionally, to take tea, to get money for her expenses, to make arrangements about their child, who had been temporarily left in the care of John Hunt, or to discuss necessary points of legal procedure. She is interested to learn his views of the picture galleries of the neighbourhood, and only draws the line when he offers to read to her one of the impassioned letters he had been writing to his friends in London in praise of his beloved Sarah Walker! The divorce was duly obtained; but Dulcinea preferred a less Quixotic swain, whereupon Hazlitt, collecting all the letters he had written on the subject, worked them up with a series of conversations supposed to have taken place between him and the girl, into a frenzied book, which he called *Liber Amoris*, and

which put £100 into his pocket but injured his reputation.

Hazlitt's love affairs seem to have been almost as numerous as those of Goethe. During the portrait-painting period, he fell in love with a Miss Railton at Liverpool, while painting a miniature of her on ivory. This suit was not favoured by the lady's family. About the same time he fell in love with a rustic beauty in the Lake district. De Quincey declares that he, about the same date, fell in love with Dorothy Wordsworth. And, later on, we find hints of tender passages between him and Sally Shepherd, daughter of Dr. Shepherd of Gateacre, and also with a Miss Windham of Norman Court, near Salisbury. And now, after his divorce and his recovery from the delirium of the *Liber Amoris*, he fell in love with and married a widow whom he met in a coach during one of his innumerable journeys between London and the country. The second Mrs. Hazlitt had some money, and soon after their marriage, she and Hazlitt, accompanied by his son, now a boy of thirteen, set off for a trip of some months' duration on the Continent. While they were at Vevey, Captain Medwin, Lord Byron's friend, called on him, and he has left us a strange picture of the middle-aged bridegroom on his wedding tour. His dress was neglected, says Medwin, and his chin garnished with a stubble of some days' standing. His countenance bore distinct

marks of late and intense application, and there was an air of habitual melancholy in his expression. His figure was emaciated, and his mind had so evidently preyed upon and consumed much of his vital energies, that his body reminded Medwin of Shelley's—a too frail tenement for the active spirit. When in Florence he went to visit Walter Savage Landor, and in Forster's *Life* we get a glimpse of him as he appeared at the Palazzo Medici. Mrs. Landor describes him as looking very peculiar 'in a dress coat, and nankeen trousers half-way up his legs, leaving his stockings well visible over his shoes.' But, as Mr. Wilson Landor remarks, his host would not know whether he were dressed in black or white; and so heartily did both Landor and Hazlitt enjoy each other's wilfulness and caprice that a strong personal liking characterised their brief acquaintance. Landor's friend Kirkup told Forster a good story, which may be quoted here, both as illustrative of Hazlitt's character, and of the then existing state of Scotch law on an interesting question:—

'He [*i.e.* Hazlitt] related to Landor, Brown, and myself one day the story of his own divorce. He told us that he and his wife, having always some quarrel going on, determined at last, from incompatibility of temper, to get separated. So, to save Mrs. H.'s honour, and have all their proceedings legal, they went to work in this way. They took the steamboat to Leith, provided themselves each with good law advice, and continued on the most friendly terms in Edinburgh till

everything was ready; when Hazlitt described himself as calling in from the streets a not very respectable female confederate, and, for form's sake, putting her in his bed, and lying down beside her. "Well, sir," said Hazlitt, turning more particularly to Landor, who had by this time thrown out signs of the most lively interest, "down I lay, and the folding doors opened, and in walked Mrs. H., accompanied by two gentlemen. She turned to them and said: Gentlemen, do you know who that person is in that bed with that woman? Yes, madam, they politely replied, 'tis Mr. William Hazlitt. On which, sir, she made a curtsy, and they went out of the room, and left me and my companion *in statu quo.* She and her witnesses then accused me of adultery, sir, and obtained a divorce against me, which, by gad, sir, was a benefit to both."'

To complete the curious picture, it must be added that while on tour with Mrs. Hazlitt No. 2, he met Mrs. Hazlitt No. 1 in Paris, and supplied her with some money, of which, notwithstanding her little property in Wiltshire, she was continually in need. Hazlitt frequently stayed at the Hut at Winterslow, while his quondam wife was living in the cottage close by; and to the last she remained in friendly correspondence with his sister and other friends, and repeatedly paid visits of some duration to the house of his relatives in Crediton. What else may have happened of a nature to disturb the harmony of the second marriage during this continental tour does not appear, but we are informed that Hazlitt and his son returned to London, leaving Mrs. Hazlitt behind; and

that when, a fortnight later, he wrote to ask when he should fetch her, she abruptly replied that she had gone to Switzerland, and that they had parted for ever. They never met again. Hazlitt's biographer occasionally makes odd comments. On this occasion he says, 'Their union had been short enough. It amounted to scarcely more than an episode!'

In spite of all this emotional disturbance, however, Hazlitt had been by no means idle. In 1822-3 he contributed five articles to Lord Byron's short-lived periodical, *The Liberal*, and in the latter year appeared his volume of *Characteristics in the Manner of Rochefoucauld's Maxims.* In 1824 he wrote an elaborate article on 'The Fine Arts' for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, as well as a book of sketches of the principal picture galleries in England; and from this time to the end of his life his industry was unflagging. Besides regular newspaper and magazine work, he produced *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits,* in 1825; *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.*, in 1830, and between 1828 and 1830, the four volumes of his elaborate and ambitious life of Napoleon.

His biographer tells us that Hazlitt never read a book through after he was thirty, and that in original composition he could scarcely at the outset see his way for two sentences. He was wont to make a jest of his want of reading and the limitations of his know-

ledge. A celebrated critic, he tells us, once took him to task on the subject of his pursuits, 'and receiving regularly the same answer to his queries, that I knew nothing of chemistry, nothing of astronomy, of botany, of law, of politics, etc., at last exclaimed, somewhat impatiently, "What the devil is it then you *do* know?" I laughed,' says Hazlitt, 'and was not very much disconcerted at the reproof, as it was just.' There is, of course, a strong spice of exaggeration in this, although his want of wide culture cannot be denied. But he had thought much and pondered deeply over his own special subjects, and he had a particularly tight grip of the limited number of things he did know. Moreover, he never wrote upon any subject upon which he was not really interested; and he was no echo; the opinions he expressed, whether right or wrong, were always his own. He is an admirable expositor and panegyrist. No other English critic so thoroughly imparts to his readers a sense of his own enjoyment of the beauties of literature. His intellectual zeal is highly contagious; he takes the reader's sympathies captive, and forces him to admire that which he admires himself.

As an essayist it would of course be absurd to place Hazlitt on a level with Montaigne; but he has many points of resemblance to the founder of this species of composition. Like Montaigne, he is not so much a great thinker, as a man with an abundance of fine

thoughts, who is never dull, and never insincere. Like Montaigne, he possesses a style concise, vigorous, rich and animated; and he is fertile in metaphors and bold similes that are never detached from the thought, and never thrown in, as are some of De Quincey's, by way of mere ornamentation. At whatever page we open almost any one of Hazlitt's volumes, we may be sure of finding, as in the essays of Montaigne, some wise thought or just observation, some criticism of literature or of life, expressed in his own striking manner, and illuminated by a quotation from one of his favourite authors so apt as to seem part of the natural clothing of his thought. Like Montaigne, also, he is everywhere autobiographical, depicting his own character, faults and foibles included, with so much acuteness as well as frankness that the egotism is seldom felt to be tiresome, yet so completely that the student of his miscellaneous writings may obtain a better conception of the man than those who knew him in the flesh.

Hazlitt was a good hater; he was also capable of ardent and sincere and enduring friendship; but to no one can he ever have appeared an amiable man. He thought Charles Lamb showed too much good fellowship, and was far too ready to shake everybody by the hand. Most men's minds were to him, he confesses, like musical instruments out of tune. He touched a particular key, and it jarred and made

harsh discord with his own. In the company of persons with whom he was unfamiliar he was painfully shy; and even old friends like Lamb and Leigh Hunt found that he shook hands 'like a fish giving a fin.' He detested letter-writing. Friends of thirty years' standing were without a scrap of his handwriting. And it appears that, after leaving home, he never traced a line to father, mother, or sister, and never wrote at any time if he could help it to wife, or son, or publisher. He thought one of the pleasantest things in the world was going on a journey—but he liked to go alone. And he was fond of taking a favourite book to read in the *incognito* ofa country inn. He had happy recollections of enviable hours spent at inns. It was at an inn at Witham Common that he solved a metaphysical problem about likeness and the association of ideas; it was at a little inn on the borders of Wales that he proved a certain theory he had in his mind by comparing some of Westall's drawings on the walls with the figure of a girl who had ferried him over the Severn; it was at an inn at St. Neots that he first met with Gribelin's engravings of the cartoons. It was a peculiar luxury to sit up half the night reading *Paul and Virginia*, which he had picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day. And he had a special delight on the 10th April 1798 (the day was his birthday, which may account for his precision as to the date), in sitting down to a volume

of the *New Eloise*, at an inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. He winds up an essay entitled *Whether Genius is Conscious of its Powers?* with the following reminiscence, which appears to be solely concerned with the consciousness of William Hazlitt:—

'The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out. I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common out-houses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a hundred years old. The one I entered opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of lark-spur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscoted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-coloured portrait of Charles II. hanging over the tiled chimney-piece. I had *Love for Love* in my pocket, and began to read. Coffee was brought in in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, everything was excellent, and the flavour of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment till a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon as Miss Prue, Bob Palmer as Tattle, and Bannister as honest Ben.'

When reading Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story*, he walked out to escape from one of the tenderest parts, in order to return to it with double relish. And he remembers that at the time an old crazy hand-organ was playing 'Robin Adair,' and a summer shower dropped manna on his head, and slaked his feverish thirst for happiness.

'Food, warmth, sleep, and a book,' he says in a *Farewell to Essay-writing*, which was not published until after his death, 'these are all that I at present ask—the *ultima Thule* of my wandering desires.' But the book must be an old one that he has already read half a dozen times. In looking back over the past, he confesses that he is surprised to find how little he has changed in tastes, likings, sentiments, and even opinions. He once told a friend that he did not seem to have altered any of his ideas since he was sixteen years old; when he received the candid reply, 'Why, then, you are no wiser now than you were then!' But he counted it to himself for a virtue. He argued that the very continuity and lastingness of his impressions were proof that they were not shallow nor hastily formed. When he first read Chaucer's *Flower and Leaf* he was charmed with its young beauty, and nothing can ever persuade him that it is not a fine poem. When he first read Dryden's version he did not get this impression, and therefore nothing can persuade him that that is as fine. In his youthful days he was an enthusiastic admirer of Claude, and people tried vainly to persuade him that Wilson was a greater painter. Their pictures have since been exhibited together at the British Institution, and all the world has come to his opinion. And so on. But if all the world declines to come round to his opinion it matters not one jot. He has just the same confidence in its rightness. 'I should be an excellent man on a

jury,' he says; 'I might say little, but I should starve the other eleven obstinate fellows out.'

Although no self-seeker, and the last man in the world to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, Hazlitt was emphatically a disappointed man. The literary life was not altogether to his liking; yet having embarked on it, he was not unnaturally desirous of receiving due recognition for what he knew was something better than commonplace; but he was on the unpopular side in most things, and the majority hooted him down. Every one in a crowd has the power to throw dirt, he says bitterly, and nine out of ten have the inclination. In his view, the prevailing spirit of the literature of his time was the defamation of men of letters. The publications which succeeded were those which told the public that those they had unwittingly been accustomed to look up to as the lights of the earth were no better than themselves, and that certain living writers of merit were a set of vagabonds and miscreants who deserved to be hunted out of society.

Yet, taking one thing with another, he is not disposed to complain. He reflects that if he had been a merchant, a bookseller, or the proprietor of a newspaper, he might have had more money, and possessed a town and a country house instead of lodging on a first-floor in Pimlico. But how could he have endured the life of a man of fortune and business? He thinks of the necessity of swallowing his breakfast in haste in order

to be in the City by eight o'clock, of attending meetings of creditors, of reading Lloyd's *Lists*, of studying the markets and prices of shares, of paying workmen, or superintending a staff of clerks. And he comes to the conclusion that he would never have had time to be himself. He is far from feeling miserable because he cannot buy a fine horse, or hire a fine house. He does not even want to possess a picture-gallery or collect a library, being quite content sometimes to see the one and read the other. 'I rise when I please, breakfast *at length*, write what comes into my head, and, after taking a mutton chop and a dish of strong tea, go to the play; and thus my time passes.'

Talfourd describes his personal appearance as that of a man 'of the middle size, with a handsome and eager countenance, worn by sickness and thought, and dark hair, which had curled stiffly over the temples, and was only of late years sprinkled with grey. His gait was slouching and awkward, and his dress neglected; but when he began to talk he could not be mistaken for a common man.' Of his way of life in furnished lodgings, after he ceased to live in a house of his own, some glimpse is afforded by his friend Patmore—

'He usually rose at from one to two o'clock in the day—scarcely ever before twelve; and if he had no work in hand he would sit over his breakfast (of excessively strong black tea and a toasted French roll) till four or five in the afternoon —silent, motionless, and self-absorbed as a Turk over his

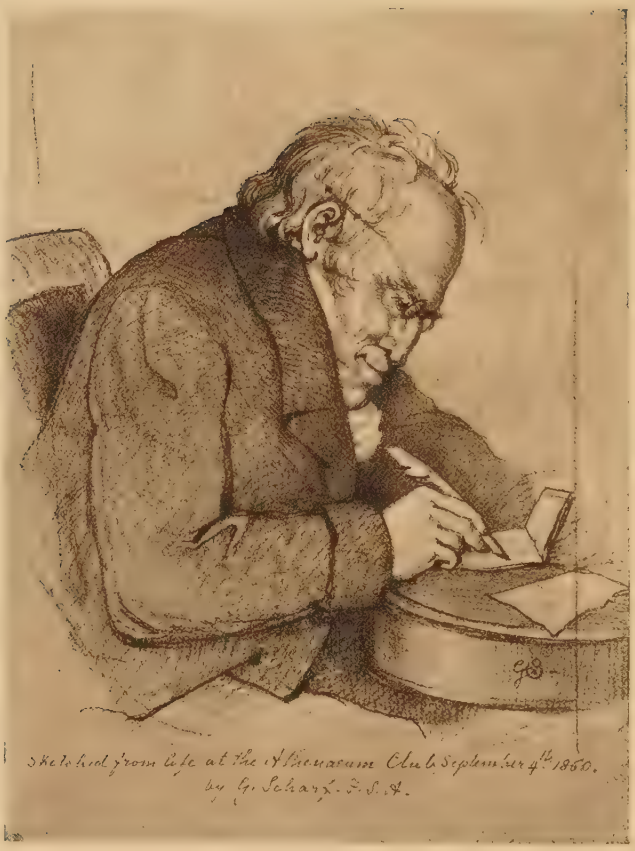
opium pouch; for tea served him precisely in this capacity. It was the only stimulant he ever took, and at the same time the only luxury.'

Late at night he usually ate a hearty supper of hot meat at a tavern, frequently at the Southampton Coffee-house, near Chancery Lane. And here, continues the same authority—

'For several years he used to hold a sort of evening *levée*, where, after a certain hour at night, he was always to be found, and always more or less ready to take part in that sort of desultory talk in which he excelled every man I have ever met with. Here, in that little bare and comfortless room, have I scores of times seen the daylight peep through the crevices of the window-shutters upon "Table Talk" that was worthy an intellectual feast of the gods.'

If it were a working-day, we learn from another source that he took his quire of foolscap paper, and immediately after breakfast commenced writing in a large, firm hand. There never was any rough draft or copy. He wrote readily, not swiftly, but easily, and as if he had made up his mind what he meant to say. This was the manuscript that went to the printer, and, according to Captain Medwin, Hazlitt's MSS. were the most beautiful he ever saw. He never made an erasure or an interlineation, and there was a rivalry between him and Leigh Hunt on this score. He reckoned that a page of his MS. was equal to a page of an ordinary octavo printed book, and could therefore gauge his progress to a nicety. When in the

humour, he could get through fifteen pages in a day, but sometimes it took him two or three weeks to finish a single essay. It is unfortunate for his fame that, with the exception of the ambitious, and occasionally brilliant, but altogether hopelessly impossible, *Life of Napoleon,* Hazlitt never attempted any sustained work worthy of his undoubted powers. He frittered himself away: reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, discoursing to a few intimates, and writing in a fragmentary manner about whatever pleased him best. He died in a lodging in Frith Street, Soho, the 18th September 1830, at the age of fifty-two. His last words are reported to have been, 'Well, I've had a happy life.' A perusal of his biography does not altogether give that impression, and the reader will perhaps be more inclined to say, 'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.'



Henry Crabb Robinson.

'OLD CRABB'

It was a matter of general astonishment to the numerous friends of Henry Crabb Robinson that 'Old Crabb,' as they invariably called him, had never been induced to undertake some great literary work. He had cultivated literary society during the whole of his long life, and had known almost every literary person worth knowing, in England and Germany, for over half a century. He had been pressed by Thomas Carlyle to write an account of his recollections of Schiller for the latter's life of that poet. He was known to have provided Madame de Staël with the information on German philosophy which appears in her book *De l'Allemagne*. He had made valuable contributions from the stores of his capacious memory to Mrs. Austin's *Characteristics of Goethe*, and to Mr. Gilchrist's *Memoirs of William Blake*. Yet the only ventures into authorship on his own account, which were published during his lifetime, were a small volume on Gall and Spurzheim's *Craniology*, in 1807, which excited hardly any public interest, and a translation of *Amatonda*, a fairy tale by Anton Wall, which fell dead from the press in 1811.

His own explanation of the matter was explicit

enough, if not particularly convincing. 'Sir,' he would declare, 'I have no literary talent. I cannot write. I never *could* write anything, and I never *would* write anything.' This is only one instance of the comical habit of self-depreciation which was characteristic of him. He not only professed to have no literary talent, but to know no law, and tried to persuade his friends that he retired from the Bar from fear that his incompetence as a lawyer might be discovered. But to take this quite seriously would be absurd. As Walter Bagehot truly remarks, no one who was incompetent ever said so. What he says in another place is much nearer the mark:—

> 'I early found that I had not the literary ability to give me such a place among English authors as I should have desired; but I thought that I had an opportunity of gaining a knowledge of many of the most distinguished men of the age, and that I might do good by keeping a record of my interviews with them.'

And an ample record he did keep; the original MSS. thereof, preserved in Dr. Williams's Library in Gordon Square, comprising thirty-five closely-written volumes of *Diary*, thirty volumes of *Journals of Tours*, thirty-two volumes (indexed) of *Letters*, four volumes of *Reminiscences*, and one volume of *Anecdotes*. A selection, estimated to comprise about a thirtieth part of this mass of biographical material, was published, under the editorship of Dr. Sadler, in

1869, in three substantial volumes, and proved conclusively that, whatever 'Old Crabb's' other literary disqualifications may have been, he was certainly not deficient in the art of graceful and picturesque narrative. That he had much to tell which was worthy of preservation, no one who had ever listened to his talk can have ventured to doubt.

Henry Crabb Robinson was the son of a tanner, and was born at Bury St. Edmunds in 1775. After an unsatisfactory education at several small private schools, he was, at the age of fifteen, articled to an attorney at Colchester. Five or six years later he came to London with a view to qualifying for practice, and was engaged as a conveyancing clerk in the office of a solicitor in Saville Row when, in 1798, an uncle died, and left him a small property of the value of about a hundred pounds per annum. He very soon gave up his employment, and for a year or more lived an unsettled life in London, reading in a desultory way, taking lessons in German, and making acquaintance with literary people.

Then came what proved to be the turning-point in his life. In the early part of the year 1800 he started off on a walking tour in Germany, with the result that, after staying some time in Frankfort, where he studied German poetry and philosophy with his friends the Brentanos, and associated with Winckelmann and other 'poetico-metaphysical religionists,' he, in 1802,

settled at Jena, entered himself as a student at the University, and passed there three of the happiest years of his life. Student life at Jena in those days certainly possessed some unequivocal advantages. His entrance fees amounted to little more than half a guinea; Jena itself he declares to be the most beautiful spot, especially in springtime, that he ever dwelt in; and his lodgings, which, he says, were among the best in the town, with a sitting-room containing four sash-windows opening into a beautiful walk of lime trees and affording a fine hilly prospect, cost him no more than £7 a year. To a high-spirited young man, who limited his studies to eight hours a day, and was capable of introducing the game of leap-frog among his German fellow-students, this may well have seemed an ideal place of existence; for, in addition to the foregoing advantages, he appears to have enjoyed unrivalled opportunities for what all his life he valued above everything, the making of personal acquaintance with distinguished men. Some of the pen-and-ink portraits of celebrities he met about this time are very neatly touched off. He tells of his introduction to the great Goethe, 'the most oppressively handsome man I ever saw'; to Schiller, who struck him as having 'a wild expression and a sickly look'; and to Herder, who impressed him as 'a fine clerical figure.' Kotzebue is described as 'a lively little man with small black eyes and the

manner of a *petit maître,*' and Schilling, as having 'the countenance of a white negro . . . the curly hair, flat nose, and thick lips, without the colour of an African.'

There must have been something more than ordinarily attractive about the young student, enabling him, as he did, so readily to make good his footing among all that was best in the intellectual life of Germany. He himself modestly attributes it to the fact that, during nearly the whole of his time at Jena, he was the only Englishman there, and says that his being 'Der Engländer' was a passport everywhere. At a later date Goethe spoke of him as a sort of missionary to Germany on behalf of English poetry, and as early as 1803 we find him introducing Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* to the notice of Herder. In after days he came to be looked upon as also a missionary on behalf of German poetry and philosophy to England. Probably his love of metaphysical discussions was not the least of his recommendations to the German mind; but if there be any part of his entertaining *Reminiscences* where the English reader is tempted to yawn, and skip a page or two, it is when the author indulges in an exposition of the fundamental principles of Kant, or some similar problem of German philosophy.

When, in 1804, Madame de Staël came to Weimar, she immediately caused young Robinson to be introduced to her, for the purpose of philosophical con-

versation. She, in her turn, introduced him to the Duke of Weimar, who came to see her one day after dinner, with the words, 'J'ai voulu connaître la philosophie allemande; j'ai frappé à la porte de tout le monde—Robinson seul l'a ouverte.' This was not, however, meant to imply that no German was competent to expound generally the philosophy of his native land, but to show, as she afterwards said, that 'the English mind is in the middle—between the German and the French—and is a medium of communication between them.' Robinson seems to have thought that, so far at least as German philosophy and literature were concerned, he was quite capable of giving instruction to a French lady, even though that lady were the celebrated Madame de Staël; and he also we[illegible]rived to get a good deal of amusement in the in addn[illegible] doing so.

to have e[illegible]

his life h[illegible]th of January,' he says, 'I first waited on her. personal [illegible] into her bedroom, for which, not knowing If the [illegible]arisms, I was unprepared. She was sitting most d[illegible]bout th[illegible]d her[illegible]as not made up for the day. It was by no m[illegible]lls of [illegible]eans a[illegible]ating spectacle, but I had a very cordial re[illegible]ost o[illegible]'eption, [illegible]o bright black eyes smiled benignantly on me[illegible]iller[illegible]After a[illegible]n expression of her pleasure at making my acq[illegible] a[illegible]rn I found[illegible]uaintance, [illegible]dismissed me till three o'clock. On my retu[illegible]very different person—the accomplished Fren[illegible]as ch[illegible]woman sur[illegible]nded by admirers, some of whom were them[illegible]l[illegible]selves distingu[illegible]hed.'

On the occasion of the Duke of Weimar's visit, already referred to, after expressing her pleasure at seeing him behave like an Englishman, though not according to German etiquette, she abruptly inquired, 'Are you rich?' The poor young student appears to have shown commendable presence of mind, for he says he felt that, so introduced, it was not a complimentary question. 'As you please to take it,' he replied. 'I am either a rich man of letters, or a poor gentleman,' and with that she was content. It was his great aim to make her feel the transcendent excellence of Goethe. But he failed. On one occasion, by speaking irreverently of the *Natürliche Tochter*, she provoked him to an expression of rudeness.

'Madame,' I said, 'vous n'avez pas compris Goethe, et vous ne le comprendrez jamais.' Her eye flashed—she stretched out her fine arm, of which she was justly vain, and said in an emphatic tone, 'Monsieur, je comprends tout ce qui mérite d'être compris; ce que je ne comprends pas n'est rien.'

He makes merry over her occasional success in spoiling a fine thing, and gives an amusing instance in connection with a noble saying of Kant:—

'I repeated to her, "There are two things which, the more I contemplate them, the more they fill my mind with admiration—the starry heavens above me, and the moral law within me." She sprang up, exclaiming, "Ah, que cela est beau! Il faut que je l'écrive'; and years after, in her *Allemagne*, I found it Frenchified thus: "Car, comme un

philosophe célèbre a très bien dit, pour les cœurs sensibles, il y a deux choses." The grave philosopher of Königsberg turned into a "cœur sensible"!'

Towards the close of 1805 Robinson took leave of his German friends and returned to England. After trying to supplement his little income by translating German pamphlets, and making an abortive attempt to get into the diplomatic service, he obtained, through his friend Collier, the post of *Times* correspondent at Altona. Forced to return home before the end of the year, in consequence of the progress of the French arms, he became for a time a sort of foreign editor of the *Times*, until, on the outbreak of hostilities in 1808, he was sent to the Peninsula as war correspondent. His tenure of this post terminated with the battle of Corunna in 1809, and his connection with the *Times* shortly after ceased altogether. While in the *Times* office he came across a curious character in the person of W. Combe, author of a now deservedly almost forgotten poem entitled *The Adventures of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque.* Combe was a tall, fine old gentleman, with a stately figure and handsome face, who did not appear to do much work with the pen, but to be chiefly a consulting man. When Walter was away Combe used to be more at the office, and to decide in the *dernier ressort.* Robinson learned afterwards that at this time and until the end of his life Combe was an

inhabitant of the King's Bench Prison, and when he came to Printing House Square it was only by virtue of a day rule. Mr. Walter, it was believed, had offered to release him from prison by paying his debts, but this the other would not permit, as he did not acknowledge the equity of the claim for which he suffered imprisonment. Combe had a habit of relating well-known anecdotes about other people and transferring the action to himself. This infirmity of old Combe was quite notorious, but at first Robinson was altogether taken in by it. He relates an amusing instance of how this romancer was once caught tripping:—

'At a large dinner-party Combe gave a very pleasant and interesting account of his building a well-known house on Keswick Lake; he went very much into details, till at last the patience of one of the party was exhausted, and he cried out, "Why, what an impudent fellow you are! You have given a very true and capital account of the house, and I wonder how you learned it; but that house was built by my father; it was never out of the family, and is in my own possession at this moment." Combe was not in the least abashed, but answered with the greatest *nonchalance*, "I am obliged to you for doing justice to the fidelity of my description; I have no doubt it is your property, and I hope you will live long to enjoy it."'

In 1809 Robinson began keeping his terms at Middle Temple Hall, but it was not until 1811 that he made up his mind to study seriously for the Bar. He was called in 1813, joined the Norfolk circuit,

and enjoyed a continuously increasing practice for fifteen years; but in 1828 he retired, having, he says, 'acquired a gentlemanly independence, such at least as would enable a bachelor, of no luxurious or expensive habits, to enjoy good society with leisure.' This 'gentlemanly independence' was the very moderate sum of 'about £200 per annum, with the prospect of something more.' Writing in 1847, he says:—

'I have frequently asserted since my retirement that the two wisest acts of my life were my going to the Bar when, according to the usual age at which men begin practice, I was already an old man, being 38, and my retiring from the Bar when, according to the same ordinary usage, I was still a young man, viz., 53.'

There is little in Robinson's career as a lawyer to interest the general reader, but a word or two may be given to some obsolete customs which he notes in his diary. In the spring of 1818 a bag was sent him from Gurney, the King's Counsel, for which he presented Gurney's clerk with a guinea. It appears that it was formerly the etiquette of the Bar that none but serjeants and King's Counsel were entitled to carry a bag in Westminster Hall. Until some King's Counsel presented him with one, the stuff-gownsman, however large his practice might be, was forced to carry his papers in his hand. The presentation of a bag was considered to mark the recipient as a rising man. In 1817 he witnessed the last trial by wager of battle in

Westminster Hall, when Thornton, in a murder trial, threw down a glove on the floor of the court, saying, 'Not guilty; and this I am prepared to defend with my body.' And in 1826 he speaks of seeing a meeting of knights girt with swords to elect the Grand Assize, an antiquated proceeding of which he somewhat mildly remarks that time has rendered it inconvenient. The sentence of the pillory, which he heard passed on Lord Cochrane and others in the King's Bench in 1814, for a fraud to raise the price of stocks by spreading false news, may perhaps be commended to the notice of the present Lord Chief Justice, as one of the antiquities of our law which might be now revived with salutary effect. 'Old Crabb' was noted for his repertory of good stories about judges and lawyers. The most extraordinary one to be found in the diary—or perhaps anywhere else—is the following, which he heard related at a dinner-party by one of the parties concerned:—

'When, in 1788, Beaufoy made his famous attempt to obtain the repeal of the Corporation and Test Act, a deputation waited on the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, to obtain his support. The deputies were Drs. Kippis, Palmer (of Hackney), and Rees. The Chancellor heard them very civilly, and then said, "Gentlemen, I 'm against you, by G——. I am for the Established Church, d—mme! Not that I have any more regard for the Established Church than for any other Church, but because *it is* established. And if you can get your d——d religion established, I 'll be for that too!" Rees told this story with great glee.'

A year or two previous to taking to the Bar, Robinson had commenced what became intimate and lifelong friendships with Charles and Mary Lamb, and with Wordsworth. Mary Lamb addressed him, familiarly and affectionately, as 'Crabby,' and Charles writes that 'Crabius' gives him any dear prints that he happens to admire, and adds, 'I love him for it and for other things.' He accompanied Wordsworth on tours in Scotland, Switzerland, Wales, and Italy, and it was to him that the poet dedicated his 'Memorials' of the last-named tour, in the lines commencing—

> 'Companion! by whose buoyant spirit cheered,
> In whose experience trusting, day by day
> Treasures I gained with zeal that neither feared
> The toils nor felt the crosses of the way.'

From 1835 onwards, until old age and death put an end to it, he was in the habit of spending several weeks with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount, and the regard in which the whole family held him may be gathered from their letters of invitation, in which such expressions occur as, 'All look forward to your arrival,' and 'I always sing the same song—No Crabb, no Christmas!' The influence of a 'buoyant spirit' must have been peculiarly welcome to Wordsworth, for he told his doctor, in 1836, that Robinson had helped him through the winter, and that he should gratefully recollect it as long as he had any memory.

During these visits to his Rydal friends, Robinson,

notwithstanding the time consumed in long walks and longer talks, managed always to do a very creditable amount of private reading. The following is his record for the five weeks spent with them in 1839: Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Arnold's *Rome*, Isaac Taylor's *Physical Theory of Another Life*, *Spiritual Despotism*, and *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, Gladstone's *Church and State*, some parts of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, and several things from Ben Jonson, besides German with Miss Harden and with some of the Arnolds. He was in the habit of reading before he got up in the morning, and after he went to bed at night, and, like Macaulay, always took care to provide himself with a moderate-sized library whenever going on a journey. The diary contains innumerable entries such as the following:—

'Rode to Witham on the outside of the Colchester coach, and amused myself by reading Middleton's *Letters from Rome*. . . . After an early dinner, walked to Blackheath, reading a very amusing article in the *Edinburgh Review* on "Ants." . . . Walked home through Hornsey and Islington, reading Schlegel's *Vorlesungen*. . . . Walked to Clapton, reading *Colonel Jack*. . . . Outside Bury coach to London, read Goethe's *Autobiography*.'

If reading were impracticable during a walk, he always managed to find somebody to talk to. Walking home from Hammersmith one day, he fell into chat with a shabby-looking fellow, whose appearance, he says, was that of a very low person, but whose con-

versation was agreeably surprising, for he talked about trade with the knowledge of a practical man of business, enlightened by the principles of political economy. On another occasion, walking home by way of Bethnal Green, he mentions meeting with a nice boy, and having a chat about Bonner's Fields, where the Papists were burnt, and other matters in which a nice boy might be presumed to take an interest. It mattered little where he was—in the streets of London, or on the Swiss mountains, in France, Germany, or Spain, he was always, as he expresses it, *young* in the facility of forming acquaintance, and having the gift of making himself agreeable to all sorts and conditions of men, he was never at a loss for some sort of companionship. And he seems to have done this without in any way sinking his own independence and individuality. In later life there were some subjects on which he could hardly bear opposition or contradiction, and he would sometimes say, 'I am a man to whom a great number of persons entertain the very strongest objection.' But at a much earlier date we find him noting in his diary how he had found it necessary to employ very plain speaking to a faultfinding companion. The entry runs :—

'At the Jardin des Plantes with E. Hamond's friend R——, and we spent great part of the day together. I believe it was not on this, but some other day, when R—— said, "I will call for you to-morrow." I answered, "I will thank you not to call. I would rather not see anything else with you, and I will tell you frankly why. I am come to Paris to enjoy myself,

and that enjoyment needs the accompaniment of sympathy with others. Now, you dislike everything, and find fault with everything. You see nothing which you do not find inferior to what you have seen before. This may be all very true, but it makes me very uncomfortable. I believe, if I were forced to live with you, I should kill myself. So I shall be glad to see you in London, but no more in Paris."'

Whether Hamond's friend R——, after this, thought he would be equally glad to see Crabb in London, is not on record.

It is noticeable that, although he was particularly fond of touring, and moreover that he made several of his tours through the most beautiful scenery of England, Scotland, and the Continent, in company with Wordsworth, the great poet of rural nature, Robinson never makes an attempt to describe any of the places he visited. So far as can be gathered from the diary, his interest was all centred in persons, celebrated persons for preference, but certainly human beings. Writing to his brother on one occasion, he says, 'I love *characters* extremely.' He was what is called a 'character' himself, and anything a little out of the normal seems to have had a great attraction for him. Thus he tells us concerning George Dyer, with whom he was on intimate terms in his young days, that the poor man, with the kindest heart and simplest manners imaginable, was not sensible of any impropriety in wearing a dirty shirt or a ragged coat; that, after inviting a friend to breakfast with him, he would give him coarse black

tea, stale bread, salt butter, sour milk, and find he had to run out to buy sugar. And of the Jena professor, Kilian, that he drew his pen through the word 'God' whenever it occurred in a book, and substituted 'The Absolute,' and propounded the astonishing thesis that 'the science of medicine does not exist in order to cure diseases, but there are diseases in order that there should be a science of medicine.' He must have had an interest also in more serious aberrations, for the diary contains quite a number of little studies of cases of insanity. There is an account of Sharp, the engraver, who said that he was commissioned to accompany the children of Israel on their taking repossession of the Holy Land, and informed Flaxman that he was deputed to engage him as architect for the rebuilding of the Temple; and of James Barry, who went about in fear of assassination, and pretty plainly hinted in the lecture-room of the Royal Academy, that when his house was broken into and robbed, it was some of the R.A.'s who had done it. Of William Blake he saw a good deal, and tells some very extraordinary things about the 'visions' and other matters. Blake told him :—

'"I saw Milton, and he told me to beware of being misled by his *Paradise Lost*. In particular, he wished me to show the falsehood of the doctrine that carnal pleasures arose from the fall. The fall could not produce any pleasure." As he spoke of Milton's appearing to him, I asked whether he resembled the prints of him. He answered, "All." "What

age did he appear to be?" "Various ages—sometimes a very old man."'

When Blake was asked why he did not draw the persons of his 'visions' in the form in which they appeared to him, he said it was not worth while; there were so many that the labour would be too great. As to Shakespeare, he said, 'He is exactly like the *old* engraving, which is called a bad one. I think it very good.' Another curious case of hallucinations carefully noted, is that of a clergyman known to his brother. This poor man, when somewhat over eighty years of age, imagined himself to be dead, and gave directions as for the burial of a dead man. He remained in this persuasion for several weeks, and when a clean shirt was being put on he reminded the servants that, he being a corpse, they must put on him nothing but woollen, or they would incur a penalty.[1] When told that if dead he could not talk about it, he, for a moment, perceived the absurdity of his notion, but soon relapsed. One tragic case of insanity, that of his friend Elton Hamond, who committed suicide, affected Robinson strongly, and he devotes to it a whole chapter of his *Reminiscences*.

'When he was about eleven years of age, Hamond said to his sister, "Sister Harriet, who is the greatest man that ever lived?" She said, "Jesus Christ." He replied, "No bad

[1] Under the old Burial Act.

answer—but I shall be greater than Jesus Christ." His after misery lay in this, that while he had a conviction that he was to have been the greatest of men, he was conscious that in fact he was not. And the reason assigned by him for putting an end to his life was, that he could not condescend to live without fulfilling his proper vocation.'

After retiring from the Bar, one of the first things Robinson did was to 'consummate an act of folly,' as he terms it, by being admitted a fellow of the Antiquarian Society. Their proceedings served to put him in anything but a good humour with himself. On the evening of his admittance, he says, two dull and insignificant papers were read, from neither of which could he collect a single thought. One was an obscure genealogy, and one was an extract from a catalogue of furniture in the palace of Henry VIII., without the slightest attempt in it to draw any inference, historical or otherwise, from any one article. Although he made some agreeable acquaintance through his connection with the Society, its subsequent proceedings interested him no more than did this first evening. He next tried the Royal Society, with a somewhat similar result, and the Linnæan Society, he says, only rivalled the others in dulness. The fact is, his mind had no scientific bent, and it is doubtful whether he really had even that disinterested love of science and pleasure in the progress which others make in it, which he believed himself to possess, and which sometimes is found in the mind of purely

literary bent. The Athenæum Club, of which he was one of the original members, was much more to his liking, and it came to constitute one of the great elements of his ordinary life. He was also one of the founders of University College, in which for many years he took a warm and active interest, becoming Vice-President of the Council, and, according to the testimony of his friend Professor De Morgan, being in heart and feeling himself a professor. But his chief interest was in the cultivation of that 'good society,' for the sake of which he had voluntarily retired from a rising position at the Bar. When eighty-three years of age he was asked for his contribution to a friend's album, and the following characteristic entry which he made was duly transferred to his own journal :—

'Were this my last hour (and that of an octogenarian cannot be far off), I would thank God for permitting me to behold so much of the excellence conferred on individuals. Of woman, I saw the type of her heroic greatness in the person of Mrs. Siddons; of her fascinations, in Mrs. Jordan and Mdlle. Mars; I listened with rapture to the dreamy monologues of Coleridge—"that old man eloquent"; I travelled with Wordsworth, the greatest of our lyrico-philosophical poets; I relished the wit and pathos of Charles Lamb; I conversed freely with Goethe at his own table, beyond all competition the supreme genius of his age and country. He acknowledged his obligations only to Shakespeare, Spinoza, and Linnæus, as Wordsworth, when he resolved to be a poet, feared competition only with Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Compared with Goethe,

the memory of Schiller, Wieland, Herder, Tieck, the Schlegels, and Schelling has become faint.'

During the later years of 'Old Crabb's' life it was his great delight to talk at his own table about these and other celebrated men and women he had known. Professor De Morgan says that Robinson was a master of the art of conversation, and not incapable of dialogue, as Coleridge was; but if any one chose to be a listener, H. C. R. was his man, for 'he had always enough for two, and a bit over.' It is related, however, that at one of Samuel Rogers's breakfast-parties the host sarcastically observed to some of his assembled guests, "If there is any one here who wishes to say anything, he had better say it at once, for Crabb Robinson is coming." And when we find that his friend Edwin Field once wrote urging him, now that his strength had begun to fail, to refrain from talking more than two hours consecutively, we may not unfairly conclude that 'Old Crabb' was in the habit of taking rather more than his fair share of a conversation. His memory was really an extraordinary one, and it remained vigorous and exact to the last. Of course his good stories were told over and over again, not unfrequently, doubtless, to the weariness and vexation of his more constant intimates. But it was observed that although an anecdote might occur in very different illustrations, and duties, it was always the same story, without unvarying verbal alteration, and

a *bon mot* was always given in exactly the same words. He had also a remarkable power of close verbal quotation from books, which Professor De Morgan says he has repeatedly verified, and he judges therefore that his friend's memory was equally good at repeating conversations. But in one particular this wonderful memory played him many a treacherous trick, for he had all his life the greatest difficulty in remembering people's names. The diary contains a good story which he tells against himself in illustration of this defect:—

'I was engaged to dine with Mr. Wansey at Walthamstow. When I arrived there I was in the greatest distress through having forgotten his name. And it was not until after half an hour's worry that I recollected he was a Unitarian, which would answer as well; for I instantly proceeded to Mr. Cogan's. Having been shown into a room, young Mr. Cogan came. "Your commands, sir?" "Mr. Cogan, I have taken the liberty to call on you in order to know where I am to dine to-day." He smiled. I went on. "The truth is, I have accepted an invitation to dine with a gentleman, a recent acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten; but I am sure you can tell me, for he is a Unitarian, and the Unitarians are very few here." And before I had gone far in my description he said, "This can be no other than Mr. Wansey."'

Crabb Robinson's breakfast-parties were almost as celebrated as those of Samuel Rogers. Dr. Sadler says that though there were witty men, and eminent men, at these parties, it was not as such that they

were invited, for Robinson did not seek to gather about him either the 'lions' or the wits of the day. His house, says another friend, was a centre of attraction for minds from the most opposite points in the wide horizon of opinion; and it was no small privilege to hear the passing topics of the day, and the chief questions of literature, talked over by able men of such widely different points of view. Walter Bagehot, who was frequently a guest at a time when the kindly host was in the habit of inviting some of the more promising students of University College to participate in this feast of reason and flow of soul, gives a more amusing picture of these parties. He says :—

'There was little to gratify the unintellectual part of man at these breakfasts, and what there was was not easy to be got at. Your host, just as you were sitting down to breakfast, found he had forgotten to make the tea, then he could not find his keys, then he rang the bell to have them searched for, but long before the servant came he had gone off into "Schiller-Goethe," and could not the least remember what he had wanted. The more astute of his guests used to breakfast before they came, and then there was much interest in seeing a steady literary man, who did not know the region, in agonies at having to hear three stories before he got his tea, one again between his milk and his sugar, another between his butter and his toast, and additional zest in making a stealthy inquiry that was sure to intercept the coming delicacies by bringing on Schiller and Goethe.'

At the age of eighty-seven, he congratulates himself on being able from habit still to repeat his old stories

with some effect, for he held that it was absolutely necessary for an old man to repeat his stories in company, if he had any desire to retain his position in society. When they can originate nothing, he says, they can still profit their juniors by recollections of the past. The half-literary conversations of half-learned people, and the commonplaces of politics and religious disputes, were an abomination to him; but he was never tired by personal talk, and he expected his hearers never to be tired by his personal talk, which, good as that talk was, might sometimes be prolonged beyond ordinary endurance. The published diary is said to convey a very faithful impression of 'Old Crabb's' conversation on these occasions, and it is certainly of infinite variety. One can imagine the vivacious old man pouring out from the stores of his capacious memory story after story in illustration of any topic that might crop up in course of conversation. How, in consequence of the great mortality during the influenza epidemic of 1833, he had found it extremely difficult to procure a mourning-coach in which to attend Miss Flaxman's funeral; how, sitting at dinner next to the blind Dr. Walcott, better known as Peter Pindar, and being requested to help the old poet to his wine, which was kept in a separate pint bottle, he had contrived to ascertain, by furtively pouring some into a second glass, that Walcott's wine was brandy; how, on one occasion, Charles Lamb had

assured him that the sense of humour was utterly extinct, and Coleridge declared painting to be one of the lost arts; or how the latter had drawn for him an elaborate comparison between Shakespeare's fools and the Greek chorus, and the former extinguished an amateur critic who animadverted on Shakespeare's anachronism in making Hector speak of Aristotle, by exclaiming, 'Why, that 's just what Johnson referred to when he wrote—

'"And panting Time toils after him in vain."'

Or, mention being made of the philosopher Godwin, of whom, in early youth, Robinson had been an ardent disciple, one can imagine how pat would come out the story of a dinner-party, at which Godwin and Rough met for the first time, and—

'The very next day Godwin called on me to say how much he liked Rough, adding—"By the bye do you think he would lend me £50 just now, as I am in want of a little money?" He had not left me an hour before Rough came with a like question. He wanted a bill discounted, and asked if I thought Godwin would do it for him. The habit of both was so well known that some persons were afraid to invite them, lest it should lead to an application for a loan from some friend who chanced to be present.'

The oddity of 'Old Crabb's' personal appearance and manner must have greatly contributed to the effectiveness of some of his stories. He tells us that his mother and father were popularly known as the handsomest pair ever known to have lived at Bury; but judging

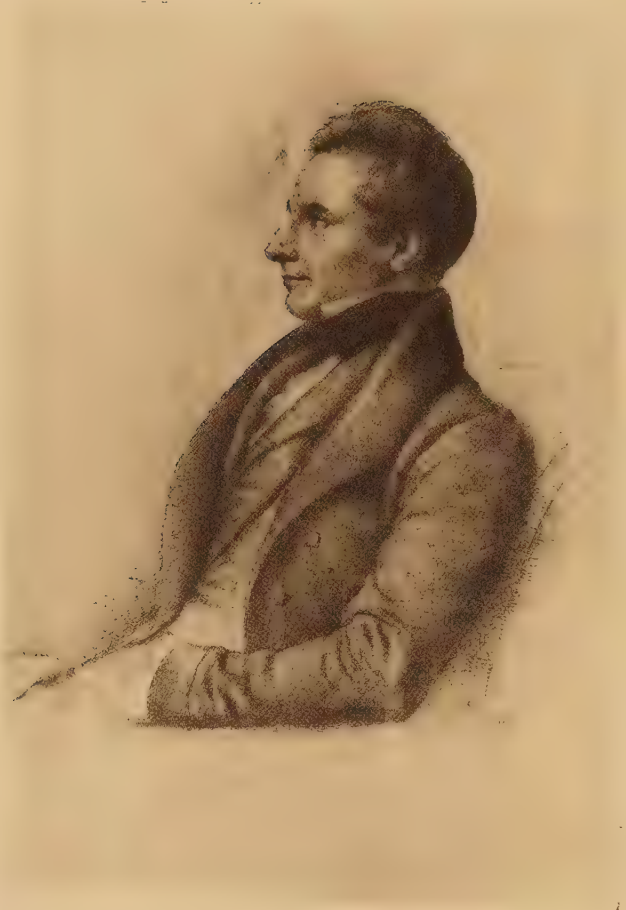
by the portrait prefixed to his *Memoirs*, and by the description of a kindly friend, he certainly failed to inherit any of their beauty. He seems to have been well enough aware of this himself, for he remarks of his bust by Ewing that 'it has great merit, for it is a strong likeness without being disgusting!' That his face was pleasing from its animation, its kindness, and its shrewdness, we can well believe, but the nose is described as 'one of the most slovenly which Nature had ever turned out,' and the chin as 'of excessive length, with portentous power of extension.' Bagehot says that 'he made a very able use of the chin at a conversational crisis, and, just at the point of a story, pushed it out, and then very slowly drew it in again, so that you always knew when to laugh, and the oddity of the gesture helped you in laughing.'

'Old Crabb' liked to speak of himself as an idle man, and suggested that an appropriate title for his *Reminiscences* would be *The Retrospect of an Idle Life*. But most people will think that a man who had worked hard for fifteen years in order to obtain a competence, who elected to remain a bachelor, and who had not a single expensive habit, might have idled for the remainder of his life without reproaching himself overmuch. And, as a matter of fact, he was, as he himself admits, 'a busy idle man.' The affairs of University College occupied him to the last, and Dr. Sadler recollects seeing Lord Brougham come into

the College Theatre, on the occasion of the prize-giving in 1866, when H. C. R. rose to help his lordship to a chair, 'the tottering footsteps of the one supported by the other—the one eighty-seven years old, the other ninety-one.' It is amusing to find Robinson, at the age of forty-five, making in his diary such an entry as the following:—

'I read some of Wordsworth's poems, and Keats's *Eve of Saint Agnes*. I was, however, so drowsy that I read this poem without comprehending it. It quite affects me to remark the early decay of my faculties. I am so lethargic that I shall soon be unable to discharge the ordinary business of life.'

When this was written he had nearly forty-seven years before him during which he was to remain in unimpaired possession of his faculties! When he had grown really old, however, he was apt to task his strength too much. When nearly ninety years of age he waived off a friend who proposed to help him on with his greatcoat after a dinner, saying, 'I look upon every man who offers to help me with my coat as a deadly enemy.' In the month of September 1861, when he was eighty-six, he records that he took a ride outside an omnibus; and the outsides of omnibuses in those days were not exactly the places one would expect elderly gentlemen to climb up upon. He made his last tour on the Continent at the age of eighty-eight, with Mr. Leonard Field as his travelling companion, but he felt that he had then become too infirm



CHARLES BABBAGE.
From a print in the British Museum.

THE CALCULATING 'PHILOSOPHER'

The present generation appears to have comparatively forgotten Babbage and his calculating machine. Some few may perhaps have given a momentary, and more or less uninterested, glance at that portion of his 'Difference Engine No. 1' which may still be found by the curious amongst the more neglected of the exhibits in South Kensington Museum; but to the great majority the inventor himself is hardly more than a *nominis umbra*. Yet Charles Babbage took a prominent part in the social as well as the scientific life of the first half of the nineteenth century. Like Bacon, he would probably have considered his name and fame safe in the keeping of 'foreign nations and the next ages,' but in case there might be a doubt about this, he in 1864, when seventy-two years of age, favoured the public with some account of himself in a volume bearing the not particularly attractive title of *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher*.

Babbage is said to have been a very plain-looking man, but it may well be doubted whether a portrait of the very plainest-looking author would not have proved more conciliatory, at least to the general

reader, than the uncanny-looking picture of the complicated cogs and wheels of a calculating machine, which he preferred by way of frontispiece. The reader who is undeterred by this, however, will not be without his reward. The first words of the preface, in fact, strike a totally unexpected note, and give promise of an entertainment which, at any rate, is something out of the common.

'Some men,' he says, 'write their lives to save themselves from *ennui*, careless of the amount they inflict on their readers. Others write their personal history lest some kind friend should survive them, and, in showing off his own talent, unwittingly show them up. Others, again, write their own life from a different motive—from fear that the vampires of literature might make it their prey.'

He has frequently had applications, he says, from persons who were anxious to write his life. Some offered to pay him for the privilege of doing it; others required that he should pay them; and a third class offered to do the work without charge. To many of these persons he sent a list of his published works, with the remark that they formed the best life of an author; and, naturally enough, he heard no more of the matter. He declares that he had no desire to write his own biography, so long as strength and means remained for him to do better work; but being anxious to place on record some authoritative account of his beloved calculating machines, he shrewdly

guessed that this would go down with the general public more readily if intermixed with some relation of the more interesting experiences of a rather varied life.

Concerning his forebears he is provokingly indifferent. Were it possible to trace the matter far enough back, he sarcastically says, one of his progenitors would probably be found to belong to that race of original tool-makers who flourished in the prehistoric stone age. As regards the history of the family in recent times, his knowledge is unfortunately limited, owing to the regrettable omission of his name from the roll of William the Conqueror's followers. He does not even tell the reader when or where he was born, and we have to gather from another source that he lighted on this planet somewhere near Teignmouth in the year 1792, and that he was the son of that Benjamin Babbage, of the banking firm of Praed, Mackworth, and Babbage, who was popularly known as 'Old Five Per Cents.'

The child is father of the man, as Wordsworth tells us, but, so far as our septuagenarian philosopher's memory serves him, there does not appear to have been anything particularly remarkable about his early childhood. He does, indeed, relate that his invariable question on receiving a new toy was: 'Mamma, what is inside of it?' but we have certainly heard of other children, never destined to exhibit the least tincture

of philosophy whatever, who invariably made the same remark. Even as a schoolboy, the one quality which might certainly have been expected to exhibit itself with more than ordinary prominence in a future Lucasian Professor of Mathematics is flatly denied him by one of his schoolfellows, who in after life assured Mrs. Andrew Crosse that so far as arithmetic was concerned Babbage was the stupidest boy in the whole school. Certainly his own account is rather different, for he tells us that not only was he always very partial to all his arithmetical lessons, but that a book entitled Ward's *Young Mathematicians' Guide* had so powerful an attraction for him that he got up at three o'clock every morning for a little extra study of it. This seems quite sufficiently incredible; but Babbage avers that there was also another boy in the school of equally studious habit and abnormal capacity for early rising, and that the two of them rose at three, lit a fire in the schoolroom, and studied Ward's *Guide* every morning for several months!

Another of Babbage's school chums, Frederick Marryat, afterwards Captain Marryat of sea-story fame, was, as may readily be believed, much more addicted to play and mischief than to work. Babbage relates a curious experiment which he and Marryat made with most astonishing results. It appears that a parlour boarder of Russian nationality had expatiated to

Marryat on the virtues of cognac; and one evening the latter somehow became possessed of a quart bottle of that spirit, which he assured the other boys was excellent stuff to drink. The taste of it, however, not proving generally acceptable, the experimental Babbage suggested that it might be better if mixed up with a lot of treacle. A general subscription for treacle was made forthwith, and this unique liqueur, being duly compounded in a large-sized flower-pot, was served round with spoons and oyster-shells to the assembled boys. Hardly had the delectable confection been consumed when the bell sounded for prayers, and, hastily wiping their lips on handkerchiefs or coat-sleeves, or whatever came handy, the boys trooped in and devoutly knelt at their respective desks. By the time prayers were over, however, the spirit had begun its work. Some of them rose up only to fall down again instantly, some turned round like spinning dervishes, some were merely stupid, some were sound asleep, some were sick, and finally all had to be carried off to bed.

In due time our budding philosopher entered on his university career. The start can hardly be described as promising, for when Babbage senior consulted a tutor of one of the colleges with a view of acquiring information that would be of use to the undergraduate, we are told that all the reverend doctor's admonitions might be summed up in the one sentence:

'Advise your son not to purchase his wine in Cambridge.' It has been cynically said that one of the uses of our two great universities is to make sure that a student does not hurt himself by overstudy, and Babbage would probably have subscribed to this opinion. He relates with much disgust how, after having paid seven guineas for a copy of Lacroix's great work on the *Differential and Integral Calculus*, he was quite unable to get any official assistance in his study of it.

'After a few days,' is his account of the matter, 'I went to my public tutor, Hudson, to ask the explanation of one of my mathematical difficulties. He listened to my question, said it would not be asked in the Senate House, and was of no sort of consequence, and advised me to get up the earlier subjects of the university studies. After some little while, I went to ask the explanation of another difficulty from one of the lecturers. He treated the question just in the same way. I made a third effort to be enlightened about what was really a doubtful question, and felt satisfied that the person I addressed knew nothing of the matter, although he took some pains to disguise his ignorance. I thus acquired a distaste for the routine of the studies of the place.'

Mathematics, however, Babbage was determined to study, the University of Cambridge and all its tutors notwithstanding; and, in conjunction with Herschel, Peacock, D'Arblay, and other like-minded undergraduates, he instituted a society for the promotion of analysis. These young enthusiasts hired a meeting-

room, held meetings, read and discussed papers, and eventually resolved to publish a volume of their transactions. To this volume, by way of indicating their adhesion to the Leibnitzian method of indicating fluxions by a *d*, instead of to the Newtonian method of indicating them by a *dot*, they gave what Babbage calls the wicked title of *The Principles of Pure D-ism, in Opposition to the Dot-age of the University.* Of course, he says, they were much ridiculed by the Dons, who darkly hinted that they were young infidels, and that no good would come of them. Babbage took his M.A. in 1817, but did not compete for honours, believing his friend Herschel sure of the first place, and not caring himself to come out second. In the course of 1815-1817 he contributed to the *Philosophical Transactions* three essays on the Calculus of Functions, which are said to have helped to found a new branch of analysis. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1816; took a prominent part in the foundation of the Astronomical Society in 1820; and in 1828 he was elected Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, 'the chair of Newton,' as he proudly says, which he held, although without giving any lectures, until 1839.

It was while an undergraduate at Cambridge, about 1812 or 1813, that the idea of calculating mathematical tables by machinery first arose in Babbage's mind; but it was not until seven or eight years later that he

seriously set about making plans for the construction of an 'engine' for that purpose. From that time forward this pet project of his was destined to consume, with little intermission, some thirty-seven years of his life, as well as the greater part of his private income. The five chapters of his otherwise entertaining volume, which Babbage devotes to an explanation of the principles on which his various calculating engines were constructed, are 'caviare to the general.'

No reader unversed in the higher mathematics need attempt to form any idea of the machines, or their methods of working, or even the results of their operations. At least, he is not likely to make much of it if he does. The essential novelty of the design, we are informed, consisted in setting wheelwork to develop the numerical consequences of the laws of any given series, the mechanism ensuring the accurate calculation of an entire table without any further trouble to the operator than a few original adjustments. The mathematical principle which he selected as the basis of his invention was the 'Method of Differences,' by which it appears that the numbers composing nearly all mathematical series can be formed by the repeated additions to fundamental numbers of a common difference, or 'element.'

Babbage relates in abundant detail the whole history of the Government's unsatisfactory dealings with him and his machines, which covered a period of nearly

thirty years. In 1822 he had published a letter to Sir Humphry Davy, then President of the Royal Society, describing the engine which he had invented 'for calculating astronomical, nautical, and other tables,' and stating that a small model of such an engine had already been made, and found to work satisfactorily. This letter was laid before the Lords of the Treasury, and in the following year they requested the opinion of the Royal Society on the merits and utility of the invention. The Royal Society reported in highly favourable terms, and Babbage, in due course, had an interview with Mr. Goulburn, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who agreed, on the part of the Government, to make a grant of £1500 towards the cost of the engine, it being understood that Babbage would pay out of his private funds the balance of the three to five thousand pounds which it was then estimated that the machine would cost. Babbage thereupon employed draughtsmen and engineers, and the work went merrily on.

About four years later, in 1828, it was found that the uncompleted engine had already cost nearly £7000, of which Babbage had paid some £4000 out of his own pocket. The Government therefore made a second grant of £1500 towards the expense. In the years 1829 and 1830 there was a good deal of further correspondence on the matter, which ended in the Government declaring the engine to be their property,

and advancing another £3000 in addition to the sums already granted, while at the same time declining to pledge themselves to complete the construction of the machine.

The work was resumed until 1833, when another difficulty occurred. Babbage, finding it no longer convenient to make payments in advance, informed his engineer that he should in future not pay him until the money was received from the Treasury; whereupon, to everybody's surprise and disgust, the engineer not only instantly dismissed all his specially-trained workmen, but also carried off the expensive tools which had been made at the expense of his employer, and thus brought matters to a deadlock. Curiously enough, it was precisely at this time that Babbage discovered a new principle of construction, simpler and less expensive, which would supersede the construction of the engine whose building had thus rudely been interrupted. Of course he instantly communicated his discovery to the Government, and desired instructions as to what action they would take, or would wish him to take, in this complicated predicament. It took eight years to find out whether Government would insist that Babbage should complete engine No. 1, or whether they would have anything to do with engine No. 2. At last, in 1842, Mr. Goulburn informed Babbage that they regretted to be under the necessity of abandoning the matter

altogether. The cost to the Government had been about £17,000, and poor Babbage asserts that, besides spending many years of his life, as well as injuring his health, for the sake of this and other works of science, he had expended upwards of £20,000 from his own private resources.

Perhaps one can hardly wonder at the Government's final abandonment of the scheme. There had certainly been a good deal of talk and much wonder expressed about the reported marvel of an automaton which could do sums better than a man. But probably the average member of Parliament had no clearer notion of what the machine was, or what it was good for, than the average man in the street. Our philosopher himself tells us that one member of the House of Lords, and one member of the House of Commons, put to him the idiotic question: 'Pray, Mr. Babbage, if you put into the machine wrong figures, will the right answer come out?' He also relates how another gentleman, after looking at Difference Engine No. 1, asked if he would kindly explain in *two* words what was the principle of the machine. What the irate inventor replied to this querist is not recorded, but he informs the reader that he could have conveyed the required information in *four* words, viz.: 'The Method of Differences,' or in six characters, viz. :—

$$\Delta \frac{7}{u_x} = 0$$

but that, of course, to such inquirers the information would have been utterly unintelligible. The like of John Wilson Croker might write to Peel that although at first sight Babbage's invention might seem incredible, yet when he considered the infinite and undiscovered variety of what may be called the mechanical powers of numbers, he was constrained to admit the probability that important consequences might be derived from such an instrument. But the practical statesman not unnaturally regarded the matter from a very different point of view.

'I should like a little previous consideration,' he writes, 'before I move in a thin house of country gentlemen a large vote for the creation of a wooden man to calculate tables from the formula $x^2 + x + 41$. I fancy Lethbridge's face on being called on to contribute.'

The story of Babbage's relations with Government may be brought to a close with a brief reference to the fate of his Difference Engine No. 2. After the failure of the negotiations already described, Lord Rosse, of telescopic fame, suggested that Babbage should make the Government a present of his plans and drawings for this improved machine, on condition merely that they undertook its construction. Babbage consenting to this, the matter was laid before the Prime Minister. Lord Derby referred it to Mr. Disraeli, who was at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his opinion that 'Mr. Babbage's projects appear to be so indefin-

itely expensive, and their ultimate success so problematical,' was final and fatal. 'Yet,' says our disappointed philosopher somewhat bitterly, 'it might possibly have enabled him to unmuddle even his own financial accounts.'

Notwithstanding his failure in Government circles, however, Babbage enjoyed a position of considerable distinction, and in matters scientific generally was able to make his power felt in various ways. His attack on the management of the Royal Society in 1830 brought about the establishment of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1831; and to him is also due the foundation of the Statistical Society of London in 1834. His 'Table of Mortality' was adopted by various Life Assurance offices; and his 'Table of Logarithms of the Natural Numbers from 1 to 108,000' is still in use. He published nearly eighty monographs on more or less technical and abstruse subjects, as well as a valuable and more popular, though now superseded, treatise on *The Economy of Manufactures and Machinery*. He was also the author of the *Ninth Bridgwater Treatise*, an elaborate attempt to reconcile breaches of continuity with the doctrine of the government of the universe by Divine law.

In his own way, too, he was a prominent society man: not only dining out with everybody of note to be found in London, but entertaining somewhat extensively him-

self. His Saturday evening receptions were very fashionable, and invitations for them were eagerly sought after. One of three qualifications, however—intellect, beauty, or rank—was absolutely indispensable, and without one of these credentials no entrance was obtainable to the modest mansion of this rather ugly, egotistical, and crotchety old mathematician, who used his stables as a workshop and his coach-house as a forge.

Babbage regrets that he made no notes of his many interesting conversations with the various celebrities with whom he came into contact, both in other people's houses and his own. But he remembers a good deal that is worth the telling. Of the Duke of Wellington, for instance, he gives us some interesting glimpses from various points of view. As an economist of time, it appears, the Duke would be hard to beat. Babbage tells how he was one day driving home in a cab to dress for a dinner-party when he observed the Duke riding down to the House of Lords. And when a very short time afterwards he arrived, quite punctually, and in irreproachable evening dress, to dine at the same house to which our philosopher had been invited, the latter could not resist expressing his surprise at the rapidity of his Grace's movements. 'Oh,' said the Duke, 'I ordered my carriage to meet me at the House of Lords, and changed my dress whilst it was bringing me here.' Babbage himself economised his time in

somewhat similar fashion, for we are told that before setting out for a walk through the London streets, or a drive in an omnibus, he always carefully set himself certain problems to think out during the journey.

An analysis of the Duke's character, which Babbage inserted in a treatise about the Exhibition of 1851, appears to have been the result, not only of familiar intercourse, but of some psychological experimentation. The following account may be noted as a specimen of his method. Lady Wilton once asked him, in the Duke's presence, what had been his greatest difficulty in contriving the calculating machine. He says that he had never consciously asked himself the question, though he knew the nature of it very well, and that it arose not from the difficulty of contriving mechanism to execute each individual movement (for he had contrived many different modes of executing each of these), but from the almost innumerable combinations amongst all these contrivances.

'It instantly occurred to me,' he proceeds, 'that a similar difficulty must present itself to a general commanding a vast army, when about to engage in conflict with another army of equal or of greater amount. I therefore thought it must have been felt by the Duke of Wellington, and I determined to make a kind of psychological experiment on him. Carefully abstaining from any military term, I commenced my explanation to Lady Wilton. I soon perceived by his countenance that the Duke was already in imagination again in Spain. I then went on boldly with the explanation of my own mechanical difficulty,

and when I had concluded the Duke turned to Lady Wilton and said: "I know that difficulty well."'

A confirmation of this view of the analogy between the working of the minds of a general in the field and a mechanical engineer in his workshop was afforded, says Babbage, by another remark made by the Duke at a small dinner-party, when the characters of the French marshals formed the topic of conversation. The Duke, on being appealed to, had freely pointed out their various qualities, and assigned to each his peculiar excellence.

'One question, the most highly interesting of all, naturally presented itself to our minds. I was speculating how I could without impropriety suggest it, when to my great relief one of the party addressing the Duke, said: "Well, sir, how was it that with such various great qualifications you licked them all, one after another?" The Duke was evidently taken by surprise. He paused for a moment or two, and then said: "Well, I don't know exactly how it was, but I think that if any unexpected circumstance occurred in the midst of a battle which deranged its whole plan, I could perhaps organise another plan more quickly than most of them."'

Samuel Rogers was another prominent figure in London Society with whom Babbage seems to have been very intimate, and of whom he has a good deal to say. Rogers and himself are cited to show the difference between the poetic and scientific use of imagination. The poet, on one occasion, spoke of a disadvantage arising from having one's windows formed of one large

sheet of plate glass—a fashion then only in its infancy. He said that sitting at dinner one day in a friend's house with his back to one of these single panes of plate glass, he fancied that the window was open, and actually caught cold in consequence. Our philosopher, perfectly aware that the unregulated imagination was capable of playing such tricks, had taken measures to keep his own strictly under control, and to the great amusement of Rogers's guests, he at once capped the poet's story by the following :—

'When I go to the house of a friend in the country and unexpectedly remain for the night, having no nightcap, I should naturally catch cold. But by tying a bit of packthread tightly round my head I go to sleep imagining that I have a nightcap on ; consequently I catch no cold at all.'

He avers that Rogers knew him well enough to be sure that he was not joking, although, apparently, Rogers's other guests did not. One day the poet told the man of science that he would teach him how to live for ever. Babbage responded with a compliment on which he seems to have rather prided himself: 'Only embalm me in your poetry,' he said, 'and it is done.' But the recipe was of quite another kind. It was a prosaic injunction to wash in cold water three times a day, and give himself on each occasion 'six or eight strokes' with a flesh-brush.

How far the scientific use of the imagination would have availed Babbage in another of his projects was

never put to the test. He tells us that at one time he proposed to write a novel for the purpose of making money to assist him in completing his Analytical Engine, and that he consulted Rogers on the feasibility of the plan. He was certainly quite sufficiently sanguine concerning the projected pot-boiler, for he says:—

'I proposed to give up a twelvemonth to writing the novel, but I determined not to commence it unless I saw pretty clearly that I could make about £5000 by the sacrifice of my time. The novel was to have been in three volumes, and there would probably have been reprints of another work in two volumes. Both of these works would have had graphic illustrations.'

One can imagine the old banker-poet's sardonic smile when his advice was naïvely asked as to the feasibility of carrying out this modest undertaking. All Babbage says, however, is that Rogers told him, *amongst other things*, that when he published his illustrated edition of *Italy*, he had paid £9000 out of his own pocket before he received any return whatever. What the final 'return' amounted to is not specified, nor is any mention made of the 'other things' which Rogers told him in this connection, which is a great pity, for without a doubt these would have been very good reading. All we can gather is that the project was summarily abandoned.

When the celebrated French thief-taker, Vidocq, came to London, Babbage sought an interview with him

for the purpose of discussing, *inter alia*, the art of picking locks. He appears to have been greatly disappointed to find the detective a mere bungler in this accomplishment, wherein he gives us to understand that he himself could give points to any burglar, or burglar-proof safe maker, in existence. One accomplishment, however, Vidocq possessed with which his critical visitor was much impressed :—

'It consisted in altering his height to about an inch and a half less than his ordinary height. He threw over his shoulders a cloak, in which he walked about the room. It did not touch the floor in any part, and was, I should say, an inch and a half above it. He then altered his height and took the same walk. The cloak then touched the floor, and lay upon it some part or other during the whole walk. He then stood still, and altered his height alternately several times to about the same amount.'

In addition to lock-picking, the making and unravelling of ciphers, which he asserts to be a cognate subject, was one of our philosopher's favourite recreations. It is very curious to find a grave man of science taking so much trouble to arrive at a set of absolutely worthless results. He relates, for instance, that he took a good English dictionary and had it copied out into a series of twenty-six other dictionaries. These various dictionaries contained respectively all words of one letter, of two letters, of three letters, etc., up to words of twenty-six letters. A second edition of all these dictionaries was then made, including all

the modifications of each word. Each dictionary was then carefully marked to show when any two or more letters of the same kind occurred in any of the words. Then each dictionary was divided into several others, arranged alphabetically; in one, according to the initial letter, in another, according to the second letter, and so on, up to the last letter of each word. And when this collection of philological freaks was completed, what important scientific purpose does the reader suppose it would serve? Our philosopher gravely assures us that by means of this apparatus he could readily solve various verbal puzzles which would otherwise take a long time to find out. He obliges with an instance. We are to suppose that it is required to turn the sentence—

I tore ten Persian MSS.,

into one word of eighteen letters. The first process is to put opposite each letter the number of times it occurs, and by this means we find that the eighteen letters of the sentence are to be arranged as two triplets, four pairs, and four single letters. Now we examine that particular dictionary which contains the words of eighteen letters each: we find that there are twenty-seven of them, and that they may be arranged in six classes, seven of them having five letters of the same, five having four of the same kind, three having three triplets, seven having two triplets, three having one triplet, and two having seven pairs. Hence it

appears that the word sought must be one of those seven which have two triplets, and also that it must have four pairs. This reduces the question to the two words—

misinterpretations,
misrepresentations,

and that the latter is the one sought becomes evident when we find that its triplets are *e* and *s*, whilst those of the former are *i* and *t*. Whether it is worth while going through so much to learn so little, as Mr. Weller's schoolboy remarked of the alphabet, we leave the reader to judge.

Perhaps, however, an amusing puzzle called 'squaring words,' which it appears can be greatly facilitated by a set of dictionaries such as has been described, may commend itself as useful to the editor of *Chums* or of *The Boy's Own Paper*. 'Let the given word to be squared be Dean,' says our philosopher. It is to be written horizontally, and also vertically, thus :—

D	*e*	*a*	*n*
e	–	–	–
a	–	–	–
n	–	–	–

And it is required to fill up the blanks with such letters that each vertical column shall be the same as its horizontal column, thus :—

D	*e*	*a*	*n*
e	*a*	*s*	*e*
a	*s*	*k*	*s*
n	*e*	*s*	*t*

In the squaring of this word by Babbage there appears to be a subtle insinuation that an easy-going dean asks for a comfortable nest. Perhaps this was not intentional, but he informs us that all the various ranks of the Church are easily 'squared,' with the single exception of the bishops.

It seems a great pity that so inoffensive a philosopher could not be left to invent his calculating machines and manufacture his multitudinous puzzle dictionaries in peace and quietness. But fate decreed otherwise. 'On a careful retrospect of the last dozen years of my life,' he tells us, 'I have arrived at the conclusion that I speak within limit when I state that one-fourth part of my working power has been destroyed by the nuisance (street noises, and especially street music) against which I have protested.' Frivolous, empty-headed people may enjoy street music, he admits, as it probably fills up a vacuum, but—

> 'It robs the industrious man of his time; it annoys the musical man by its intolerable badness; it irritates the invalid; deprives the patient who, at great inconvenience, has visited London for the best medical advice, of that repose which, under the circumstances, is essential for his recovery; and it destroys the time and the energies of all the intellectual classes of society by its continual interruptions of its pursuits.'

He is evidently in dead earnest about this matter, and devotes a whole long chapter to setting out his case; but the scientific and methodical manner in

which he tabulates the 'instruments of torture permitted by the Government to be in daily and nightly use in the streets of London' has a slightly comical appearance. He sets them out as follows:—

Organs.	Accordions.
Brass bands.	Halfpenny whistles.
Fiddles.	Tom-toms.
Harpsichords.	Trumpets.
Hurdy-gurdies.	The human voice in various forms:
Flageolets.	Shouting out objects for sale.
Drums.	Religious canting.
Bagpipes.	Psalm-singing.

And with similar precision he enumerates the encouragers of street music as 'Tavern-Keepers, Public Houses, Gin Shops, Beer Shops, Coffee Shops, Servants, Children, Visitors from the Country, and Ladies of Doubtful Virtue.' It is sad to relate that he feels himself compelled to brand certain titled ladies as 'occasional offenders' in this particular, but he is careful to add that 'these are almost invariably of recent elevation, and deficient in that taste which their sex usually possesses.'

The poor distracted man gained very little by his repeated protests, and appeals to 'our imperfect law.' The offenders usually got off scot-free, and they and their friends, together with some of his neighbours, formed a conspiracy to annoy him in every possible way. Itinerant musicians were hired expressly to play in front of his house, hooting crowds followed him

whenever he sallied forth to find a policeman, anonymous letters were sent him, threatening all sorts of terrible evils, dead cats and other offensive things were thrown down his area, and time after time his windows were broken. The noises of the London streets have certainly not decreased since poor Babbage ceased to hear them, and probably this portion of his troubles may arouse more lively sympathy than his difficulties with the calculating machines. He admits, like Leech, that householders must bear any amount of noise which is fairly due to the legitimate use of roads, but contends that such things as organs, brass bands, games, religious services, or Punch and Judies, are positive nuisances, and, as such, should be strictly prohibited. He roundly declares that the only certain remedy is to forbid such things in all cases, and with them also 'that varied multitude of vocal noises made by persons parading the streets singing, relating tales, praying, offering trifling articles for sale, etc., all of them with the transparent object of begging.' In all cases which admit of it, he suggests, the police ought to be directed to take possession of the offending instrument and convey it to the police court, there to await the decision of the magistrate. Furthermore—

'If street music is to be at all tolerated by law, against which I protest in the strongest manner, then every performer ought to carry on his back or upon his instrument his name and address, or an authorised number, by which the public

might be saved from wasting their time by false addresses, now so frequently given.'

And he concludes his case by the relation of what he evidently considered to be a crushing repartee :—

'I was once asked by an astute and sarcastic magistrate whether I seriously believed that a man's brain would be injured by listening to an organ; my reply was, "Certainly not," for the obvious reason that no man having brain ever listened to street musicians.'

Beggars of another kind also gave our philosopher a good deal of trouble, and after sundry adventurous expeditions into the wilds of St. Giles's and elsewhere, he usually returned with the conviction that he had been deluded by an accomplished swindler of the professional mendicant fraternity. In fact Babbage's life seems to have been as full of troubles as that of the patriarch Job, and he seems to have had a fancy for recording all 'the sundry small inconveniences which a Cabinet Minister might perhaps think trivial, but which, in a slight degree, try the temper even of a philosopher.' He was mortified, among other things, by having the utterly undeserved reputation of omniscience, and says it was a common annoyance to have some one say to him, '"Now, Mr. Babbage, will you, who know everything, kindly explain to me . . .," when perhaps the thing whose explanation was required might be the metre of some ancient Chinese poem, or whether there were any large rivers in the planet

Mercury.' Yet occasionally the same reputation seems to have given him a good deal of satisfaction, and he relates with much complacency how he was once taken for a commercial traveller. It occurred when he was engaged in collecting materials for his treatise on *The Economy of Manufactures.* During a week spent at a commercial hotel in Sheffield, he sat up one night after supper discussing a variety of commercial subjects with the occupants of the travellers' room. Being somewhat late for breakfast next morning, he found that all his acquaintances of the previous evening had departed except one, and from this one he learned that, after he had retired for the night, they had all debated what trade he travelled for. One maintained that it was the hardware line, another that he travelled for a great ironmaster, while a third was sure he was in the spirit trade. 'Well,' said Babbage, 'I suppose you knew better than any of your friends!' 'Certainly,' replied the other, 'I told them I knew perfectly well that you were in the Nottingham lace trade.'

As a private gentleman on tour, also, Babbage appears to have got along very well. He even declares that he can give the traveller a few hints how to get money, although candidly admitting that he never had any skill in making it himself. His method of travelling will appear very antiquated to the Cook's tourist of to-day, but might prove none the less interesting or comfortable on that account. He made the tour, he

says, in a carriage built from his own design at Vienna; a strong, light, four-wheeled *calèche*, in which he could sleep at full length, whenever so inclined.

'Amongst its conveniences were a lamp by which I occasionally boiled an egg or cooked my breakfast. A large shallow drawer in which might be placed, without folding, plans, drawings, and dress coats. Small pockets for the various kinds of money, a larger one for travelling books and telescopes, and many other conveniences. It cost somewhat about sixty pounds. After carrying me during six months, at the expense of only five francs for repair, I sold it at The Hague for thirty pounds.'

The methods of getting money are unfortunately omitted from our philosopher's chapter of 'Hints for Travellers,' but there are several ingenious schemes for enabling them to avoid spending it extravagantly. A scientific man of distinction, travelling in a four-wheeled *calèche* of his own design, was naturally the recipient of many attentions of which it behoved him to make some suitable acknowledgment. The following was one of his methods:—

'Having visited the Thames Tunnel a day or two before I started for the Continent, I purchased a dozen copies of the very lucid account of that most interesting work. Six of the copies were in French and the other six in the German language. I frequently lent a copy, and upon some occasions I gave one away.'

Babbage might well have added to his *Economy of Manufactures* a supplement on the economy of making

presents, for he goes on with the utmost seriousness to tell the reader that a most valuable piece of his travelling merchandise consisted of a couple of dozen buttons, stamped by Barton's steel dies.

'These buttons,' he says, 'displayed the most beautiful iridescence, especially in the light of the sun. They were formed by ruling the steel die in parallel lines in various forms. The lines were from the four- to the ten-thousandth of an inch apart. I possessed a die which Mr. Barton had kindly given me. This I kept in my writing-case, but I had had a small piece of steel ruled in the same way, though not with quite the same perfection, which I always kept in my waistcoat pocket; it was also accompanied by a small gold button in a sandal-wood case. These were frequently of great service. The mere sight of them procured me many little attentions in diligences and steamboats. Of course I never appeared to be the possessor of more than one of these treasured buttons, so that if any one had saved my life its gift would have been thought a handsome acknowledgment.'

To occasionally give away a copy of a pamphlet in return for services and attentions rendered to him, and to keep a gold button in reserve, by way of reward for any one who might save his life: surely the force of economy could no further go! Yet this was the man who, after spending £20,000 on his uncompleted darling project of a calculating machine, without any hope of seeing his money back again, cheerfully accepted his brave old mother's advice to go on with his invention, even if it compelled him to live on bread and cheese.

Babbage was a much disappointed man. The failure

to complete the calculating machine was the greatest, but by no means the only disappointment of his life. He would have liked a seat in Parliament, and was twice rejected by the borough of Finsbury. In 1816 he was a candidate for the Professorship of Mathematics at the East India College at Haileybury, but failed, he says, because he had no interest. In 1819 he tried for the Mathematical Professorship at Edinburgh, but was rejected entirely through 'not being a Scot.' In 1820 he was refused a seat at the Board of Longitude, 'because of the part he had taken in the institution of the Astronomical Society.' In 1824 he was asked to be director and actuary of a life assurance office at a salary of £1500 a year; but before opening-day came the promoters gave up the entire scheme. Soon after this he was offered the management of another life assurance society, but, having just at that time some hopes of completing the Difference Engine, he felt himself bound to decline the post. After mentioning this circumstance, he quaintly and laconically remarks: 'that office is still in existence.'

In 1846 the Mastership of the Mint became vacant, and having already sat in 'the chair of Newton,' at Cambridge, he aspired to sit in another chair of the great Sir Isaac on Tower Hill. But he could not have this one, because for party reasons 'it was found necessary to detach Shiel from O'Connell,' and the appointment therefore fell to Shiel. Twice he made application

for the post of Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; but on the first occasion 'the place was intended for the brother-in-law of a Secretary of State,' and on the second occasion for the brother of another Secretary of State. In 1846, and again in 1848, he applied for a seat on the Railway Board; but each time he was passed over in favour of a military officer, who, he broadly hints, though by no means fitted for the post, was appointed by reason of family or political influence. Such a series of disappointments as this would be very apt to make a more amiable man say bitter things, and certainly Babbage does not always mince his words.

'I have, in the course of my experience,' he says, 'frequently heard of appointments made in the most flattering and unexpected manner; of titles offered, in fact, in such a way that it was impossible to decline them. Having myself seen a good deal behind the scenes of the drama of life, I have repeatedly found that these *unsolicited* honours have been obtained by the most persevering applications, and by the most servile flattery. Indeed, to the great scandal of public life, success has, in some instances, been attained by a man condescending to oppose his own party, and as some observer has wittily remarked, by attempting to break into the shop for the purpose of serving behind the counter.'

Having no wish to crucify these malefactors, he says, he leaves their names in obscurity, but he unquestionably expected that his contemporaries, at any rate, would know perfectly well at whom his shots were fired.

Notwithstanding all this, the concluding chapter of this curious autobiography is devoted to the subject of 'Agreeable Recollections,' and the old man not ungracefully leaves the stage after a dignified reference to the various additions which he has been permitted to make to human knowledge, especially in his endeavour to discover 'those laws of mind by which man's intellect passes from the known to the discovery of the unknown.'

After having given up all hope of completing any one of the calculating machines himself, Babbage told a friend that he meant to leave behind him notes and diagrams sufficient to enable some future 'philosopher' to carry out his idea of the Analytical Engine. Judging by our philosopher's own experience of the matter, it might have occurred to him that the most useful notes he could have left to his successor would have been banknotes to the value of some twenty thousand pounds.

A FORGOTTEN JESTER

If an inquiring stranger in London, at any time between 1827 and 1857, should have happened to ask who was then reputed to be the wittiest man in England, nine out of every ten who pretended to any familiarity with the literary society of the metropolis would have pointed out a dapper little fellow, standing scarcely more than five feet high, whose short, but by no means thin or fragile-looking, body was surmounted by a big head, a face furnished with a prominent aquiline nose, a pair of quick-glancing blue eyes overhung by bushy eyebrows, and a mass of long hair flung carelessly back from a smooth, high forehead, which altogether gave him something of a leonine appearance. If our inquiring stranger had gone on to ask what were the most characteristic performances of this lion-headed little man, it would at once have become apparent that Douglas Jerrold's fame as a convivial wit had already threatened to eclipse his reputation as a writer. His sharp sayings, carelessly flung at high and low (says his son), so circulated about London that 'hundreds of men who had never read a line he had written knew his name as connected with some flash of wit, some

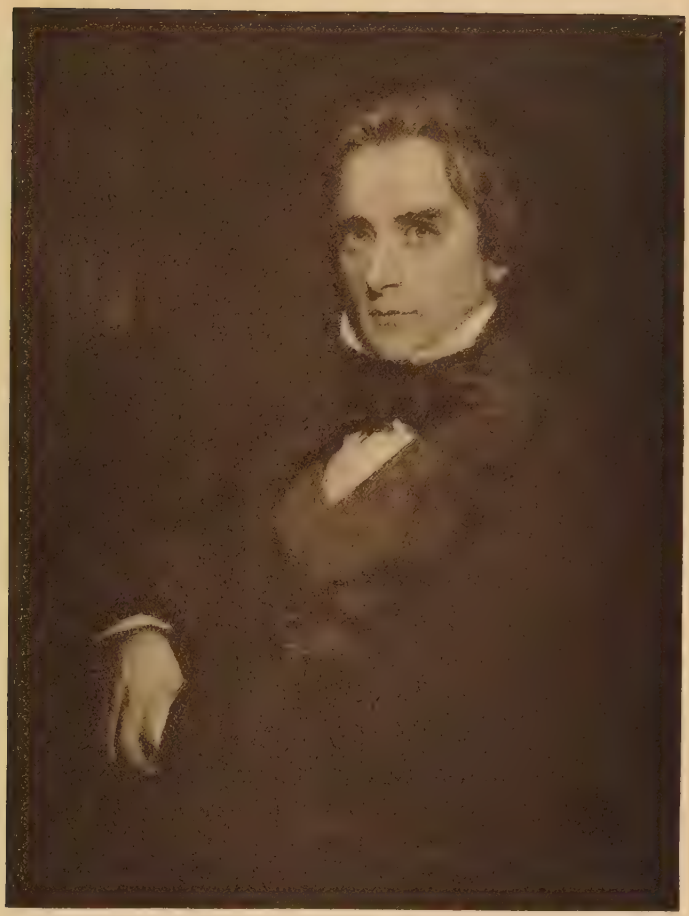


Photo. Emery Walker.

DOUGLAS WILLIAM JERROLD.

From the painting by Sir Daniel Macnee, in the National Portrait Gallery.

happy epithet, some biting jest.' His power of repartee was extraordinarily spontaneous. But the abundant wit was too often of a somewhat acrid flavour; and as, of course, it was always the biting jest which was best remembered and travelled farthest, the wittiest man in London was currently reported to be also something of a brute. His friend Charles Mackay said that, 'when his jest came to the tip of his tongue, it had to explode, though the heavens should crack, or his best friend take it amiss.' And it is something of a testimony to the existence of certain other sterling qualities which his friends were forced to recognise in Jerrold's character, that they did not more often take amiss the pointed shafts which he was perpetually aiming at all around him.

Mrs. Cowden Clarke, indeed, tells us that he had a way of looking at you, when he dealt a repartee, which so plainly showed his own sense of the fun of the thing, and so evidently called for a similar appreciation on the part of the victim, that the joke was deprived of all personality or ill-nature. His reported jests do not altogether give that impression. 'We row in the same boat, you know,' said a certain humorous writer pleasantly to him, by way of enlisting his sympathy in some literary project. 'Yes,' was the prompt and unconciliatory reply, 'we row in the same boat—but with very different skulls!' Another acquaintance (according to one version of the story, it was Thackeray) walked

up to him one day at the club and said, 'Why, Jerrold, I am told you said —— was the worst book I ever wrote.' 'I said no such thing,' was the instant retort; 'I said it was the worst book *anybody* ever wrote.' How Thackeray (if Thackeray it was) took the fun of this is not on record; but we happen to know that another friend was mortally aggrieved by a similar kind of witticism. John Abraham Heraud, author of certain philosophical works, and of two ambitious poems, entitled *The Descent into Hell* and *The Judgment of the Flood*, wished to get Jerrold, who was then on the staff of *The Athenæum*, to give him a favourable notice. One day, when they happened to meet, Heraud tentatively said, 'Jerrold, have you seen my *Descent into Hell*'? 'No,' came the somewhat obvious answer, 'but I wish to Heaven I had!' John Forster, the friend and biographer of Dickens, was also a lifelong friend of Jerrold's; but we imagine his friendship with the latter must have been frequently strained almost to snapping-point. Sir Joseph Crowe, in his *Reminiscences*, gives us a specimen of the manner in which Jerrold was in the habit of baiting Forster. During the preparations for the performance of *Every Man in his Humour* by the amateur company of which both Jerrold and Forster were members, the former picked up a scene-painter's pencil (a thick, wooden thing, worn down by repeated cutting), and, looking at this in his arch way, exclaimed, 'Hallo, here

is the exact counterpart of John Forster, short, thick, and full of lead!' Forster became crimson with rage, and jerked out at Douglas,—'Mr. Jerrold, sir, a joke is a joke, but this is really going too far.' The joker, however, was quite capable of going much farther. When some friends were talking of Forster, and one of them suggested that he was to Dickens what Boswell was to Johnson, Jerrold agreed; 'But with this difference,' said he, 'that he does not do the Boz well.' This was not necessarily unfriendly. But when, some time after, he went up to the modern Boswell at his club, and said, 'Well, Forster, they tell me Dickens pays the dog-tax for you,' it must be admitted that none but the most good-natured of friends would ever have forgiven the insult. And Jerrold must have been perfectly conscious that some of his sharp sayings had given dire and lasting offence, even when he had only intended a little harmless pleasantry; for, on his deathbed, referring to his associates on *Punch*, he said, 'Tell the boys that if I've ever wounded any of them, I've always loved them.' Those to whom Jerrold is only known by his reputation as a wit, may possibly think, after the specimens here quoted, that such a reputation may be cheaply gained by unlimited insolence and a total disregard for the feelings of other people. But a glance over some of the other specimens of his wit to be found in the eight volumes of his collected works, and a perusal of the biography

written by his eldest son, will tend to produce a very different impression of the man.

Douglas Jerrold was born in London on January 3, 1803. His parents were strolling players; the mother being a young, energetic, capable woman, and the father a good and amiable, but weak and unpractical man, who was older than his own mother-in-law. In 1807 Mr. Jerrold and his family moved to Sheerness, where he had taken the lease of a small theatre, and where, for some seven or eight years, he lived in comparative prosperity on the fruits of the nautical dramas which his little stage presented for the delectation of the bluejackets, who at that time were always to be found at Sheerness in crowds. With such surroundings as these, the boy not unnaturally wanted to be a sailor; and at the absurdly early age of eleven he was duly rigged out as a middy, and placed on board the guard-ship *Namur*, then stationed at the Nore. But he saw little service, and what he did see he did not like. In April 1815 he was transferred to the gunboat *Ernest*, which was commissioned to convey transports to Ostend, on the eve of the battle of Waterloo. Later in the year, the *Ernest* brought home a cargo of wounded men from the fight; and in October of the same year, on the conclusion of peace, the ship's company was paid off, and Midshipman Jerrold quitted the service for ever. His short experience of it, however, left two impressions on his

mind which were ineffaceable. He saw the British sailor flogged with cat-o'-nine-tails,—a sight which he declared made him sick whenever it was recalled to his memory; and the *Ernest*'s ghastly cargo of wounded soldiers, with their raw stumps and festering wounds, disgusted him for the remainder of his life with the very idea of war. The peace, however, spelt ruin to the little theatre at Sheerness; and in 1816 the Jerrolds moved back to London, and settled themselves in Broad Court, Bow Street. The father and mother got an occasional engagement on the boards of the London theatres, and the boy was apprenticed to a printer.

In after life he would tell his young friends for their encouragement that, as a friendless boy in London, he had stamped his foot on the pavement and vowed that he would become somebody. He used to rise with the first peep of day to study his Latin and French grammars before going to work. Shakespeare was read through and through during the winter evenings; and, by judicious pinching, his scanty wages enabled him now and again to get from the circulating library a coveted volume of Walter Scott. In talking with the youthful literary aspirants whom he liked to gather round him after he had become a well-known author, he would often refer to these early struggles. No man, he would tell them, ever achieved greatness who had not, for some years of his young life, risen

at six o'clock every morning. And the youth of the day did not, in his opinion, read either the Bible or Shakespeare thoroughly enough. In his early days, he boasted, nobody had ever quoted a line of Shakespeare to which he could not instantly add the next line. 'Plain living and high thinking, my boys, that's the maxim,' was his constant advice. And the spirit to carry a young fellow successfully through life was that which Henry Brougham showed when, mounting the Edinburgh coach for his first journey to London, he exclaimed: 'Here goes for Lord Chancellor!'

In 1819, when Jerrold was sixteen years of age, he was working as a compositor for the printer of *The Sunday Monitor*. Having been to see *Der Freischutz* one evening, he wrote a criticism of the performance, and dropped it into his employer's letter-box. Next morning he was delighted to receive, not only his own manuscript to set up, but also an editorial note, addressed to the anonymous correspondent, requesting further contributions. He very soon received the appointment, such as it was, of dramatic critic to the paper; and at the same time he busied himself in writing verses and other trifles for several of the magazines. In 1821 his first play was acted at Sadler's Wells theatre. It had been written three years previously, when he was only in his fifteenth year; and for the first production of a mere lad, it had a highly curious history. He had at first called

it *The Duellists*; but before its representation this bald title was changed to *More Frightened than Hurt*. After being performed at Sadler's Wells, it fell into the hands of a French adapter, who translated it, and secured its representation in Paris. Some years later an English adapter, unaware of its origin, retranslated the French version into English, and it was played at the Olympic, in London, with the title of *Fighting by Proxy*.

At the mature age of twenty-one Jerrold married; and in the following year, feeling that the responsibilities of married life necessitated a more settled income, he engaged with Davidge, of the Coburg Theatre, to write all the dramas, farces, and dramatic squibs which that penurious manager might require, in consideration of a small, fixed, weekly salary. Four years he thus served Davidge, who proved to be a hard and ruthless taskmaster, until in 1829, after a furious quarrel, manager and author parted in anger. Fortunately for Jerrold, he had just completed a nautical drama entitled *Black Eye'd Susan* or *All in the Downs*. With the manuscript of this play under his arm, the indignant little author went straight off to Elliston, of the Surrey Theatre, and was at once engaged as dramatic writer to that establishment, at a salary of five pounds a week. *Black Eye'd Susan* proved triumphantly successful. It ran for over three hundred nights at the Surrey; it was borrowed by

Covent Garden; actors and managers, all over the country, reaped a golden harvest from it; it established Jerrold's reputation as a dramatist; and it brought him in hard cash the sum of—seventy pounds!

This success naturally acted as a spur to Jerrold's energies, and the play-writing went merrily on. In 1830 he was successful again with *The Devil's Ducat* at the Adelphi; and in the following year was gratified by the reception of one of his pieces at Drury Lane. In 1832 appeared *The Rent Day*, a play suggested by, and the scenery taken from, Sir David Wilkie's two great pictures; and the author learned that when Wilkie went to see the performance at Drury Lane he cried over it like a baby. These successes were rapidly followed up by several plays produced during 1833 and 1834 at Covent Garden and the Haymarket. In 1835, besides writing a considerable number of stories, essays, and sketches for the newspapers and magazines, he produced four plays for the principal London theatres, only one of which turned out a failure. In 1836 he was tempted into a theatrical venture of his own. But the Strand Theatre, as managed by him and his brother-in-law, W. J. Hammond, turned out a bad speculation; and Jerrold for some years forsook the drama, and turned his attention to other matters. During 1837 and 1838 he contributed a number of short stories and sketches to *The New Monthly Magazine*, many of which were

subsequently included in the three volumes entitled *Men of Character*, which, with illustrations by Thackeray, were published in 1838. In 1840 he edited *Heads of the People*, to which he was also a voluminous contributor, and in 1841 *Punch* came into being, to which he contributed regularly and copiously, from its second number to the week of his death. In 1842 he pleased the theatre-goers with *Bubbles of the Day* at the Haymarket; and in 1845 he still better pleased them with *Time Works Wonders*, a play which drew full houses for ninety nights. Several plays followed, and it was not until after the failure of *A Heart of Gold* in 1854 that he ceased to write for the stage altogether. In the meantime his unflagging energy had been devoted to a number of other literary matters. In 1843 *The Illuminated Magazine* was founded by Mr. Herbert Ingram, of *The Illustrated London News*, under Jerrold's editorship; and to this he contributed, month by month, the book upon which he always most prided himself, *The Chronicles of Clovernook*. The magazine, however, was but a short-lived affair, and in two years the editor was free to venture on one of his own, called *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine*, for which he wrote *St. Giles's and St. James's*, a characteristic story, no less characteristically illustrated by John Leech. In the summer of 1846 appeared the first number of *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, a Radical Sunday

journal, which at first bid fair to become a good property; but in a very short time both magazine and newspaper belied their promise, and were allowed to die. These were Jerrold's last literary adventures on his own account. In 1852 he became editor of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, at a salary of £1000 a year. Under his conduct the paper rose in circulation by thousands; and he continued to edit it up to the last week of his life. He died June 8, 1857, at the age of fifty-four.

As a record of strenuous and incessant literary production, with scarce a break for a period of thirty-five years, the foregoing record would be hard to beat. In fact, it was too strenuous, too incessant, and, moreover, it began too prematurely for the work to be all on his highest possible level. He once said to an ardent young literary enthusiast, who was burning to see himself in print: 'Be advised by me, young man; don't take down the shutters before there is something in the shop to sell.' But he did not reck his own rede. He was only nineteen when he began definitely to write for his living; and from that date to the end of his career the ink continued to flow ceaselessly from his pen. His mind was never allowed to lie fallow for a time, or given any opportunity for that quiet brooding which is a necessary preliminary to the production of the higher kinds of art. Hence it is that, neither in his dramas nor in his stories, do we find any rounded and complete character.

His *dramatis personæ* are seldom even portraits of individual oddities: they are merely the author's puppets; and although he pulls the strings cleverly enough, and at the same time keeps up a perpetual fusillade of brilliant remarks, it is too obvious that the actors are only so many marionettes.

The vehicle which best suited Jerrold's peculiar faculty was *Punch*. The cap and bells of the jester fitted his talents to a nicety; none the less that, as with many of the professional jesters of old time, a good deal of his fooling was meant in deadly earnest. He was essentially a moralist and satirist, and every one of his stories is as obviously contrived to point a moral as are the fables of Æsop. Of course he was a party man, and he had the good sense never to pretend to be anything else. He was an ardent advocate of popular education, of prison reform, of the abolition of capital punishment; and he was the declared enemy, among other things, of aristocratic distinctions, of ecclesiastical abuses, and of our military system. Controversy on subjects of this kind is in its very nature ephemeral, and the light shafts of ridicule which Jerrold shot week by week in the columns of *Punch*, at whatever he thought to be a sham or an injustice, effective as they may have been for party purposes at the time, are scarcely more worthy of permanent preservation than the leading articles in his newspaper. His wit had, and was

always meant to have, a sting in it; but it is only those who happen to be in accord with the author's social and political opinions who will much appreciate the keen thrust of his satire. A fair specimen perhaps, is his advocacy of the removal of the bishops from the House of Lords, 'in order that they may wholly devote themselves to the House of the Lord'; and another is the ironical manner in which he took up his parable in *Punch* when a certain prominent Doctor of Divinity announced that what the masses of this country wanted was not cheap bread and free education, but to be made each and all professing Christians. Jerrold, in answer to this, drew a picture of what he conceived would happen if, for one day, everybody in London practised pure Christianity. Of course, he began with the bishops. The Right Reverend Fathers, we are told, met at Lambeth Palace, and then—

'discovering that locusts and wild honey—the Baptist's diet—may be purchased for something less than ten thousand a year,—and after a minute investigation of the Testament, failing to discover the name of St. Peter's coachmaker, or of St. Paul's footman, his valet, or his cook, take counsel with one another, and resolve to forego at least nine-tenths of their yearly incomings.'

The snobbishness of some newspaper paragraph happens to raise his bile, and he asks sarcastically why decent ladies and gentlemen require to be praised simply for not going on all fours.

'A Duke runs into a farmhouse from a pelting shower: warming his toes at the hearth,—he—yes—he 'talks familiarly' with his rural host! At this the historian flourishes a pen in a convulsion of delight. Was ever such condescension, such startling affability? Of course it was expected that the distinguished visitor would command the baby at the breast to be carefully washed, and straightway served up to him in cutlets.'

But the great, ultra-virtuous, and much belauded middle class is not allowed to get off scot free. He finds that there is snobbishness in trade also: 'Wholesales don't mix with retails; raw wool doesn't speak to halfpenny ball of worsted; tallow in the cask looks down upon sixes to the pound; and pig-iron turns up its nose at tenpenny nails.' Character, too, he finds to be regarded too much in the light of a valuable commercial asset, like money: 'When you 've a good deal, you may risk some; for if you lose it, folks still believe you have plenty to spare.' This kind of thing he poured out unceasingly for something like a quarter of a century; but with mere comic writing, and buffoonery for its own sake, he had no sympathy. Even *Punch* was sometimes too flippant for him, and we find him writing to Charles Dickens in 1846 to express his hope that the world will soon get tired of this eternal guffaw at all things, which was at that time (would that it were not now!) so rampant.

'After all life has something serious in it. It cannot be

all a comic history of humanity. Some men would, I believe, write the comic sermon on the Mount. Think of a comic History of England; the drollery of Alfred; the fun of Sir Thomas More in the Tower; the farce of his daughter begging his dead head, and clasping it in her coffin on her bosom. Surely the world will be sick of this blasphemy.'

Notwithstanding the touch of bitterness which is apparent in many of Jerrold's writings,—a bitterness due, no doubt, to the poverty, hardship, and squalid surroundings of his early days, it was a faulty criticism which judged the author to be a cynical misanthrope. Hepworth Dixon declared, in an obituary notice of his friend in *The Athenæum*, that if every one who had received a kindness from Douglas Jerrold would fling a rose on his grave, the spot would be marked by a mountain of flowers. And it is not only from the naturally partial biography by his son Blanchard, but from various independent sources, that we get a picture of him as a hearty, jovial, frank, impulsive, and even recklessly generous man. He was more than once himself in financial difficulties through unwisely helping others. The last time he ever used his cheque-book was to oblige a needy friend; and the last letter he ever opened was one from another friend who desired to postpone the repayment of a loan. Thomas Cooper relates that, after hawking his *Purgatory of Suicides* all over London in 1845, in the vain attempt to find a

publisher for it, he at length managed to get a letter of introduction to Jerrold. This he shyly left, together with the manuscript of his poem, at the latter's house at Putney; and when he called a day or two later for an answer, he was surprised at the cordiality of his reception. 'Glad to see you, my boy,' cried the hearty little man, warmly grasping the other's hand; 'your poetry is noble—it's manly; I'll find you a publisher, never fear it. Sit you down, and' ringing the bell as he spoke, 'what will you take?' Cooper thought if all misanthropes were like this, he would like to make the acquaintance of a few more of them. And Jerrold's promises were not made to be broken. He persuaded his own publisher to bring out Cooper's poem, at once accepted a story from him for *The Shilling Magazine*, and soon afterwards sent him to the provinces as special correspondent for the weekly newspaper. A story told by the coachmaker who built a brougham for him, when at length Jerrold was able to afford himself that luxury, may be quoted in this connection. After admiring the bright polish of his new carriage, Jerrold happened to say that the street urchins would soon cover it with scratches. Whereupon the coachmaker at once proposed to put a row of spikes at the back. 'By no means, man,' exclaimed Jerrold, turning sharply and almost fiercely upon him; 'and know that to me a thousand scratches on my carriage would be more welcome than one on

the hand of a footsore lad, to whom a stolen lift might be a godsend.' In fact, the cynic of popular report turns out, on nearer view, to be a pronounced sentimentalist.

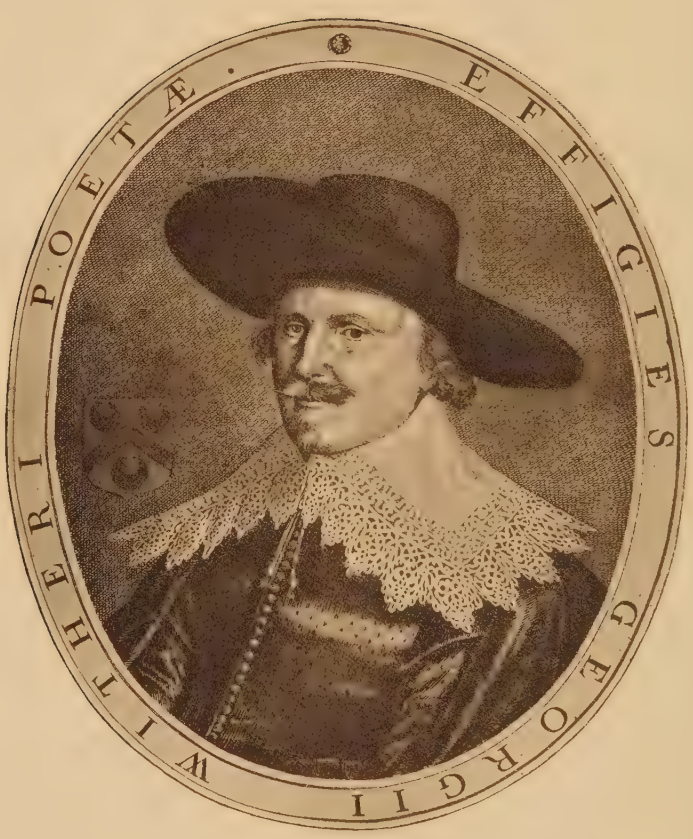
Jerrold not only made a brave struggle with poverty in his younger days, but in after life an equally brave struggle with illness and bodily pain. He suffered much from rheumatism in various forms, and frequently wrote or dictated humorous articles while writhing in agony. He once worked for six months in a darkened room, while suffering from an acute inflammation, which he described as something like toothache in the eye. He composed witty sketches for *Punch* while lying motionless, undergoing the water-cure at Malvern; and some of his *Chronicles of Clovernook* were produced at a time when he had to be carried about in an armchair at Herne Bay. In Dr. Wigan's book on *The Duality of the Mind* we find an anecdote of him given to illustrate the control of the mind over the body. While desperately ill, Jerrold was, as he said, in the position of having to feed a family out of an inkstand; and after some hesitation he ventured to ask his medical attendant what hope there was of his speedy recovery. The doctor evaded the question as long as possible, but at last was compelled to admit that he believed there was no hope at all. 'What,' exclaimed the sick man, 'die and leave my wife and five helpless children? By God! I won't die.' And

he got better from that hour. Charles Dickens bears eloquent testimony to his gentle, affectionate nature, regard for friends, and fondness for children, and tells a pleasant story of his reconciliation with him after an estrangement.

'A good many months had passed without my even seeing him in the street, when it fell out that we dined, each with his own separate party, in the Strangers' Room of a club. Our chairs were almost back to back, and I took mine after he was seated and at dinner. I said not a word (I am sorry to remember), and did not look that way. Before we had sat so long, he openly wheeled his chair round, stretched out both his hands in a most engaging manner, and said aloud, with a bright and loving face that I can see as I write to you, "For God's sake, let us be friends again! A life 's not long enough for this!"'

The glimpses we get of Jerrold at home and among his friends almost all exhibit him in an amiable light. His son describes an afternoon in the garden of West Lodge, Putney, when grave editors and contributors, after basting one another with knotted handkerchiefs, wound up the afternoon's play by romping and turning heels over head among the haycocks in the orchard. And on another occasion, after a dinner-party in the garden tent, all the guests, including Dickens, Maclise, Macready, and John Forster, indulged in a most hilarious game at leap-frog. Jerrold could never learn to play any game requiring manual skill, nor to dance, nor to ride a horse, any more than he could carve a

joint, draw a straight line, or even draw a cork. But he was fond of music, and could sing a capital song on occasion; and his free boyish spirit, and loud, clear laugh, were remarkable to the end of his life. He disliked noisy London, and loved to live on the very edge of the suburbs, where he could always 'see a bit of green,' and go about in a jacket and straw hat. At home he always adhered to what he called simple country fare; and even in clubs he disliked elaborate dinners, liveried servants, and other conventional luxuries; and he never sought to get himself into what is called Society. But he was one of the most clubbable of men; and the Mulberries, the Museum, the Hooks and Eyes, Our Club, and other such long-vanished institutions always looked to Jerrold to lead the fun. Unfortunately the most brilliant of after-dinner talk has usually no more sparkle in it when served up to a succeeding generation than have the leavings of last night's soda-water bottles. A writer's fame must rest upon his writings; and it cannot be contended that Jerrold was one of the great artists. But the four closely-printed volumes into which the best of his work has been compressed form a very storehouse of quaint conceit and burnished epigram. Much of it is too pyrotechnical for steady and continuous reading, but all of it is good to dip into now and again, both for pleasure and for profit.



GEORGE WITHER.
From a print in the British Museum.

A PURITAN POET

JOHN BRIGHT is reported to have said to a friend, 'If you come across a quotation in any speech of mine that you don't recognise, it is probably Wither.' It is possible that to some of his friends the name might have been as unfamiliar as the quotations; they may even have taken it as a misprint for Whittier. Yet George Wither was a person of no inconsiderable note in his day, and among the voluminous writings which he has left behind him are several passages of rare grace and beauty. His career as an author commenced in 1613, the year which witnessed the production of the last of Shakespeare's dramatic creations, and it only terminated with his death in 1667, the year following the great fire of London. He may be said to have outlived his own fame. Pope refers to him in *The Dunciad* as 'wretched Wither,' sleeping 'among the dull of ancient days, safe where no critics damn'; but he was in Pope's time only remembered as a renegade cavalier who, like all renegades, was extremely bitter against his old party. Ritson, the crusty collector of old ballads, called him the English Bavius, and the more genial Bishop Percy merely says that 'he distinguished himself in youth by some pastoral pieces

that were not inelegant.' Subsequent critics, however, have adopted a much higher estimate of Wither's poetical work. Ellis, in his *Specimens of Early English Poets*, and Sir Egerton Brydges in his *Censura Literaria*, both quoted Wither extensively, and spoke enthusiastically of the sweetness and melody of his verse; while Charles Lamb, beyond question the most competent of all judges of our older literature, has devoted to his earlier poems an essay full of fine and felicitous praise.

George Wither was born in 1588 at Bentworth, in Hampshire. His family was apparently of some position and wealth, for he records how in his youthful days hounds, hawks, and horses were at his command, and intimates that he might have required 'without denial,'

'The lute, the organ, or deep-sounding viol,'

or indeed anything else he had a mind to, to cheer his spirits. In his sixteenth year he was sent up to Magdalen College, Oxford, where for some time he found more delight in 'practice at the tennis-ball' than in practice at 'old Scotus, Seton, and new Keckerman.' Hardly, however, had he turned over a new leaf, and begun to love a learned college life, when he was removed from Oxford and taken home, much to his disgust, 'to hold the plough.' Though not altogether congenial to him, a farming life was far from unendurable, but a proposal to apprentice him to 'some

mechanick trade' was not to be thought of with equanimity, and the youth, then eighteen years of age, hurried off to London. Here he entered himself at Lincoln's Inn, and was fortunate enough to strike up a close friendship with William Browne, who was then meditating his *Britannia's Pastorals*, the influence of which powerfully affected all the earlier work of his friend. Wither's plans were not very definite, but he had a vague notion that he could push his fortune at court. Naturally, therefore, he dropped into the laureate vein, and we find him, in company with numerous other bardlings, bewailing the untimely death of Prince Henry with a sheaf of elegies, and the next year composing *epithalamia* to celebrate the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth. There was apparently not enough of the sycophant in Wither's composition to ensure him a rapid rise in court favour, and failing to obtain any preferment, he turned satirical, and in 1613 produced his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, the dedication to which says that, having been provided with no work, he has employed his leisure in observing the vices of the times. Warton says the satires are severe but not witty. They certainly contain none of those pungent personalities such as Dryden and Pope loved to make their adversaries' ears tingle with. Hate, envy, revenge, covetousness, vanity, and the rest of them, receive some hard knocks, but it is always abstract vice that he scourges, never particular men in whom such vices are

presumed to be personified. Perhaps, however, it was more evident at the time than it is now what people in high places the cap fitted. At all events, the satires sufficed to obtain for their author a lodging in the Marshalsea prison. Curiously enough, he appears to have thought that as satire had got him in, satire might get him out. Accordingly, in 1614 he composed another, written with much vigour, and addressed to the King, in which he shows himself altogether unrepentant for his former offence.

Perhaps it was thought wise to muzzle such an outspoken muse, or some other influence may have been at work; at any rate, Wither was soon liberated, and moreover presented by the King with a patent for some *Hymns and Songs of the Church* which he proposed to write. But he had chosen the wrong road to fortune. The man who wrote the following lines had evidently mistaken his vocation when he proposed to rise in life by the arts of the courtier, though, as we have seen, he had at least tried his hand at the doleful elegies he now scorns, and apparently to no purpose:—

> 'I have no Muses that will serve the turn
> At every triumph, and rejoice or mourn
> Upon a minute's warning for their hire,
> If with old sherry they themselves inspire.
> I am not of a temper like to those
> That can provide an hour's sad talk in prose
> For any funeral, and then go dine,
> And choke my grief with sugar-plums and wine.

I cannot at the claret sit and laugh,
And then, half tipsy, write an epitaph.
. . . . . .
I cannot for reward adorn the hearse
Of some old rotten miser with my verse;
Nor, like the poetasters of the time,
Go howl a doleful elegy in rhyme
For every lord or ladyship that dies,
And then perplex their heirs to patronise
That muddy poesy.'

So he will find out a more excellent way to success. During his imprisonment in the Marshalsea, he had composed *The Shepherd's Hunting*. This is a pastoral poem in five eclogues. In the first eclogue, Willie (William Browne) comes to lament his friend's imprisonment, and finds that he may save his labour, for Philarete (Wither) has discovered that 'stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage,' and professes to have enjoyed more true bliss and content in the quiet prison than ever he knew in the contentious court. In the second and third eclogues Philarete relates, under the thin disguise of a shepherd's hunting, the whole story of his imprisonment and the cause of it. It is in the fourth eclogue that Wither first uses, and at once with consummate mastery, that seven-syllabled trochaic metre which so delighted Charles Lamb. Philarete advises his friend to produce more pastorals. Willy dejectedly replies that what he has done has not been very well received; that he has been told he is too young, and should 'keep his skill in store till he

has seen some winters more.' Whereupon Philarete declares,

> 'That the sacred Muses can
> Make a child in years a man.'

And then follows 'that rapturous melody of praise and thanksgiving to poetry, which,' says Mr. Swinburne, 'has made the modest name and gentle genius of Wither immortal in the loving memory of all who know and cherish that "best earthly bliss" which filled his prison-house with "comfort and delight."' This splendid panegyric, which extends to a hundred and twenty lines, has been more frequently quoted than anything else that Wither wrote, but it is not by any means so generally known that any apology need be offered for transcribing one of its finest passages again. She, he says of his Muse,

> 'She doth tell me where to borrow
> Comfort in the midst of sorrow;
> Makes the desolatest place
> To her presence be a grace;
> And the blackest discontents
> To be pleasing ornaments.
> In my former days of bliss
> Her divine skill taught me this,
> That from everything I saw
> I could some invention draw,
> And raise pleasure to her height
> Through the meanest object's sight.
> By the murmur of a spring
> Or the least bough's rusteling,

By a daisy, whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed,
Or a shady bush or tree,
She could more infuse in me
Than all nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man.'

'The praises of poetry,' says Charles Lamb, 'have been often sung in ancient and in modern times; strange powers have been ascribed to it of influence over animate and inanimate auditors; its force over fascinated crowds has been acknowledged; but, before Wither, no one ever celebrated its power *at home*, the wealth and the strength which this divine gift confers upon its possessor. Fame, and that too after death, was all which hitherto the poets had promised themselves from their art. It seems to have been left to Wither to discover that poetry was a present possession, as well as a rich reversion; and that the Muse had promise of both lives, of this and of that which was to come.'

Wither's 'darling measure,' in which the fourth eclogue of *The Shepherd's Hunting* and the greater part of *The Mistress of Philarete* are written, has been sometimes spoken of by critics as octosyllabic verse, which plainly it is not. It is the seven-syllabled trochaic couplet, which Shakespeare lightly laughed at as the 'butter-woman's rank to market,' and which, as used at a later date by Ambrose Philips, roused Henry Carey (he 'who lived a life free from reproach, and hanged himself, October the 4th, 1743') to parody it and add

a new adjective to our English vocabulary in calling it Namby-Pamby. Wither himself seems to anticipate some cavilling at it, for he says—

> 'If the verse here usèd be
> Their dislike: it liketh me.
> Pedants shall not tie my strains
> To our antique poets' vaines.'

Doubtless it is a form of verse that readily runs into doggerel, and the fatal facility of its flow tends to the production to a maximum of gingling sound with a minimum of sense. But in the hands of masters like Ben Jonson, Fletcher, Wither, and Milton it has proved itself an instrument of considerable compass, and they have drawn from it not only strains of 'linked sweetness long drawn out,' but notes of deeper harmony and power. In a note to the essay already quoted, Lamb cites the following lines from *The Shepherd's Hunting*—

> 'If thy birth doth bravely tower,
> *As she makes wing she gets power;*
> Yet the higher she doth soar,
> She 's affronted still the more,
> Till she to the high'st hath past,
> Then she rests with fame at last,'

and, remarking that 'a long line is a line we are long repeating,' he asks what Alexandrine could express 'labour slowly but strongly surmounting difficulty' as it is done in the second of these lines? Again, he says, in more sweeping terms, 'What metre could go beyond these, from *Philarete*?'—

'Her true beauty leaves behind
Apprehensions in my mind
Of more sweetness than all art
Or inventions can impart,
Thoughts too deep to be express'd
And too strong to be suppress'd.

In 1618 appeared *The Motto*, written, he says, by way of recreation after his liberation from the Marshalsea. It is a long poem (some two thousand lines) in the heroic couplet, and is divided into three sections corresponding to the three divisions of the motto, *Nec habeo, Nec curo, Nec careo.* It is in form a continuous self-eulogy, yet, as has been more than once remarked, it is singularly free from any offensive or distasteful egotism. The reason of this is supplied by Wither himself in his preface to *The Motto.* 'My intent was,' he says, 'to draw the true picture of mine own heart; that my friends who knew me outwardly might have some representation of my inside also. And that, if they liked the form of it, they might (wherein they were defective) fashion their own minds thereunto. But my principal intention was, by recording those thoughts, to confirm mine own resolution; and to prevent such alterations as time and infirmities may work upon me.' That is to say, he had no intention of holding up a likeness of himself for all men to admire and imitate, but of painting the picture of a man such as he fain would have himself to be. And, being endowed with a pure and healthy mind, his ideal is a high and noble

one. Regarding *The Motto* as a work of art, we may, in spite of an occasional fine passage, adopt his own words. 'The language,' he says, 'is but indifferent: for I affected matter more than words. The method is none at all: for I was loath to make a business of a recreation.'

In 1619 appeared *Fidelia*, an elegiac epistle of forty-four pages from a forsaken fair one to her inconstant lover. The lady, without any feigning, pours out her own love with all the ardour of an Eloisa and something of the plain-spokenness of a Juliet. There are some fine touches in the poem, but though Wither seems to have been a master in the art of love, we have a shrewd suspicion that there is too strong a tincture of the masculine element in Fidelia's philtre.

Fair Virtue, though written some time before, did not see the light until 1622, and even then was published anonymously, because Wither had some, though perfectly groundless, fears that it would damage the credit of more serious work which he then had in hand. It was entitled *Fair Virtue; or, The Mistress of Philarete, written by Himself*; and in a preface the publisher says that he has entreated the author to explain his meaning in certain obscure passages, and to set down to what good purpose the poem would serve. All he could get from him was, however, that the first would take away the employment of his interpreters, and the second would be well enough found out by all such as had honest understandings. The reader is

designedly left in doubt whether the poet is merely celebrating the charms of his own mistress, or laying his votive offering at the shrine of Virtue herself. The introductory epistle favours the latter view.

'On this glass of thy perfection,
If that any women pry,
Let them thereby take direction
To adorn themselves thereby,
And if aught amiss they view,
Let them dress themselves anew.

. . . . .

This thy picture therefore show I
Naked unto every eye.
Yet no fear of rival know I,
Neither touch of jealousy.
For the more make love to thee
I the more shall pleasèd be.

I am no Italian lover
That would mew thee in a jail;
But thy beauty I discover
English-like without a veil.
If thou mayst be won away,
Win and wear thee, he that may.'

In another passage, however, he distinctly states that he is painting no imaginary portrait, but that a real love for a real lady is the fount and inspiration of his song.

'For if I had never seen
Such a beauty, I had been
Piping in the country shades
To the homely dairy maids,
For a country fiddler's fees,
Clouted cream and bread and cheese.'

It is also probable that he would have remained in the embarrassing condition in which he found himself when, as he confesses, he simultaneously courted Amaryllis, Phyllis, Daphne, and Cloris,

> 'And in love with all together,
> Fearèd the enjoying either,
> 'Cause to be of one possest,
> Barr'd the hope of all the rest.'

But now the face of the whole round world is changed, and he is as constant as the needle to the pole. He proceeds to sing the praises of his mistress in his own rude way, as he modestly says, but really with many a delicate touch of dainty art, as in the following lines :—

> 'When her ivory teeth she buries
> 'Twixt her two enticing cherries,
> There appear such pleasures hidden
> As might tempt what we 're forbidden.
> If you look again, the whiles
> She doth part those lips in smiles,
> 'Tis as when a flash of light
> Breaks from heaven to glad the night.'

Charles Lamb, with unerring taste, has pointed out two passages of *The Mistress of Philarete* as being of pre-eminent merit. They are indeed the fairest flowers in this lover's coronal. The first passage is that wherein he wonders that all men, even her servants, are not pleading love, and then explains, according to love's philosophy, why they are not. It

is too long to be transcribed in this place, and the reader must be referred to Lamb's essay, or to a copy of Wither's poems if haply he may find one.

The second passage is that in which he vindicates himself against the common charge of hyperbole by boldly denying the possibility of hyperbole, and justifying his 'setting forth her glories by unheard-of allegories.' The whole passage is fine, and the following six lines are among the loveliest of their kind in our literature :—

> 'Stars indeed fair creatures be;
> Yet amongst us where is he
> Joys not more the whilst he lies
> Sunning in his mistress' eyes,
> Than in all the glimmering light
> Of a starry winter's night?'

But he is not content only to celebrate his mistress's beauty of hand and foot, of lip and eye and brow; he must also praise her spiritual perfections, for,

> 'This that I have here exprest
> Is but that which veils the rest.
> An incomparable shrine
> Of a beauty more divine.'

And moreover,

> 'These are beauties that shall last
> When the crimson blood shall waste,
> And the shining hair turn grey,
> Or with age be worn away.'

It is strange that any man capable of producing

poetry of this high order should ever have felt called upon to apologise for it, as Wither did on more than one occasion. In his satire *Of the Passion of Love*, after railing in good set terms at the absurdities commonly perpetrated by people in that undesirable condition, he bethinks himself of his own *Philarete*.

> 'How now; was't not you (says one) that late
> So humbly begg'd a boon at Beauty's gate?'

Yes; he must admit it was; and all he can say for himself is that he has had his follies like other men, and doubtless cut quite as absurd a figure as any imaginary lover depicted in the present satire. And again, in a postscript to *The Shepherd's Hunting*, he anticipates a similar objection, though in this case he takes his stand boldly on the feelings natural to ardent youth; for he says, 'Neither am I so cynical but that I think a modest expression of such amorous conceits as suit with reason will yet very well become my years; in which not to have feeling of the power of love were as great an argument of much stupidity, as an over sottish affection were of extreme folly.' This is admirably put, and quite unimpeachable; but there was not the slightest necessity for him to apologise. Allowing for the change in manners since the seventeenth century, Wither's muse is as modest as Mr. Coventry Patmore's.

Nearly all Wither's best work was produced in the decade 1613 to 1623. Between these two dates were

published his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, *Fidelia*, *The Shepherd's Hunting*, *The Motto*, and *The Mistress of Philarete*. With these we take leave of Wither the poet, and in subsequent publications make acquaintance with Wither the preacher, the prophet, the puritan, and the politician. Wither was no exception to the general rule that those who abandon for public life the studies of poetry and philosophy suffer a steady degeneration, partaking like brooks and rivers, as Landor finely says, 'the nature of that vast body whereunto they run, its dreariness, its bitterness, its foam, its storms, its everlasting noise and commotion.' Not that Wither ever became quite the fanatic that he has been represented to have been. Up to the time of the outbreak of the civil war, he was an adherent of the established order both in church and state. His *Hymns and Songs of the Church* were approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he says in his *Furor Poeticus*—

> 'The Royal Power I loyally obey'd
> And though it did oppress, was so afraid
> Of innovating, that a Reformation
> Thereof I wishèd, not an extirpation.'

He never became a sectary, but described himself, like Milton, as a member of the Church Universal. One sentence from his *Answer to Some Objections* is worth quoting. 'True faith,' he says, 'cannot be evidenced without good works, which being imperfect

in the best of men, we have no such certain mark whereby unfeigned disciples may be known, as by their being loving to each other, and charitably affected towards all men; yea, although they are our personal enemies.' His own charitableness was considerably tempered by an ineradicable contentiousness. He lived under eleven different forms of government, and he managed to be more or less at loggerheads with them all.

Wither was in London during the devastation caused by the plague of 1625. 'When hundreds of thousands forsook their habitations' he remained, 'to be a Remembrance both to this city and the whole nation.' In his *Britain's Remembrancer* he describes his experience in walking the deserted streets. The Royal 'Change and St. Paul's Cathedral, usually crowded promenades, were avoided as places of certain danger; the Strand was as unfrequented as a country road; the Inns of Court were as silent as the grave; smokeless chimneys betokened that numberless houses were uninhabited, and where pleasant women's faces were once to be seen, 'the empty casements gapèd wide for air.' Two poets, Thomas Lodge and John Fletcher, are said to have perished in this pestilence, but Wither had no belief in contagion, and notwithstanding that he awoke one morning with 'round ruddy spots' (the fatal signs) on his breast and shoulders, he came through the danger unscathed.

In 1639 occurred his first experience of soldiering, when he was a captain of horse in the expedition against the Scots. On the outbreak of the war in England, Wither, according to Anthony Wood, sold his estate and raised a troop for the service of the Parliament. In 1643 he was appointed governor of Farnham Castle. He asserted that his superiors neglected to supply him with adequate means of defending the place; his enemies said that he deserted it. Anyhow, as Campbell remarks, the defence of his conduct which he afterwards published seems to have been far more resolute than his defence of the fortress. Wither's own house and farm were among the first to suffer during the war, for, as early as January 1642, we find the House of Commons making an order for the immediate payment to him of £328, 6s., by way of compensation for the plunder by the King's cavaliers. But Wither claimed to have lost as much as £2000, and obtained an order empowering him to indemnify himself by seizing the goods of those who had plundered him. Among these was Sir John Denham, and Wither promptly seized upon his neighbour's property. Some time after this, as Aubrey tells the story, Wither was taken prisoner, and in great danger of his life; but Sir John Denham prayed the King not to hang him, for that while George Wither lived, he (Denham) could not be accounted the worst poet in England. Wither's life was accordingly spared.

In 1643 we hear of him, in poverty and distress, getting pecuniary aid from his generous friend Mr. Westron and from the Earl of Essex. He appears to have been perpetually petitioning Parliament for the redress of his grievances, and getting orders for his relief which were almost invariably of no benefit to him.

The energy which in happier circumstances might have given us permanent additions to our poetical literature, expended itself in cursory comments on current events, futile vaticinations, and profitless controversies. In 1653 his ever-restless mind produced a curious scheme for parliamentary reform. He declared the means of settlement to be an 'Everlasting Parliament.' Every city, shire, or borough, 'on pain of being deeply fined,' was to elect a representative annually, and this was to be done in such a manner that a twelfth part of the members retired, and new members took their places every month. The members were to be paid their wages regularly, and the House was to elect a fresh Speaker also every month. Undue influence in elections was to be punished by exile, and bribery in the public offices by death. There was to be a new Parliament House, 'with towers adorned and strong walls fenced about,' and having gardens and fair walks adjoining thereto. Members were to receive free lodging in twelve mansions to be erected close by the House there was to be 'a constant table of

one meal a day' for all and sundry, and many other things arranged,

> 'so as they might
> Pursue the public service with delight.'

And 'forasmuch as outward habits draw respect unto men's persons,' the members were to be all alike attired in a peculiar robe or upper garment, and from each man's neck was to be suspended a golden tablet whereon was enamelled 'the British Isles within the ocean placed.' This poetico-political pamphlet may be commended to the attention of certain hon. members now at St. Stephen's.

Wither's own circumstances, however, were growing worse and worse. His enemies caused his name to be struck from the Commission of the Peace for Hampshire and from the militia, and he had become so poor that when it was proposed to rate him at two horses for the service of the militia, he pitifully protested that he was hardly able to find so much as the bridles. In August 1661 his books and papers were seized by authority of a warrant from Secretary Nicholas; he was charged with publishing a seditious libel against members of the House of Commons, and in the course of a few days found himself a prisoner in Newgate. He was kept in confinement until July 1663, when he was released, on giving to the Lieutenant of the Tower a bond to be of good behaviour. A second time he saw the plague ravage London, and although

none of his household succumbed to it, the sickness and subsequent fire played such havoc among his friends that, some being dead, some impoverished, and the remainder scattered, neither he nor they knew where to find each other, and there were few or none to help him in the destitution of his latter days. He died on May 2, 1667.

Wither's poetry, at least all that was written between 1613 and 1623, before he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, is characterised by fine feeling, delicate fancy, true pathos, and singularly sweet versification. He is at his best in the seven-syllabled trochaic measure of *Philarete* and *The Shepherd's Hunting*, but many of his lyrics are only below the best, and have that indescribable charm of the older Elizabethan manner, which he lived long enough to see evaporating into the courtly sprightliness of his later contemporaries. Only one of these keeps its place in the popular anthologies, the 'Shall I, wasting in despair,' to which Sir Francis Palgrave in his *Golden Treasury* prefixed the title of 'The Manly Heart.' But Wither has the true lyrical note, and the music of more than one song of his 'beats time to nothing in the brain' of many a student who knows and loves the treasures that lie buried in worm-eaten volumes on the dustiest shelves of our great libraries.

A FORGOTTEN ROYAL WRITER

It is certainly not surprising that the English people bear the name of their first King James in no very affectionate remembrance; for, during a period of twenty-two years, he was mainly engaged in sowing the seeds which in the reign of his son brought forth a sanguinary revolution. But neither the disastrous results which followed the attempt of the monarch to put into practice his pet theory of 'King-Craft,' nor the vivid picture of the man as a goggle-eyed and slobbering buffoon, which has been stereotyped by Sir Walter Scott in the *Fortunes of Nigel*, should be allowed to blind us to the undeniable interest which attaches to James's efforts as an author. Of course we need not pay much attention to the fulsome flattery of his contemporaries. In the opening sentences of *The Advancement of Learning*, for instance, we may find Bacon affecting an 'extreme wonder' at the largeness of the King's capacity, the faithfulness of his memory, the swiftness of his apprehension, the penetration of his judgment, the felicity and order of his elocution, and other admirable qualities too numerous to mention, including 'the knowledge and illumina-

tion of a priest . . . the learning and universality of a philosopher,' and a degree of eloquence 'full of facility and felicity, imitating none and inimitable by any.' But, since the fall of the House of Stuart, the pendulum has swung as far the other way. Those who have not ignored James have mostly despised him. Horace Walpole, for example, in his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*, sneeringly remarks that nobody can imagine that Buchanan dictated a word of the *Demonologie*, or of the 'polite treatise' *A Counterblast to Tobacco*, as Roger Ascham may have corrected or pointed some of the periods of *his* illustrious pupil; and ungrudgingly admits that 'the quotations, puns, scripture, witticisms, superstition, oaths, vanity, prerogative, and pedantry, the ingredients of all his sacred majesty's performances,' may be set down as the pure product of his own capacity. In fact, almost the only critic who has ever found a good word to say for James, since Archbishop Williams preached his funeral sermon, is Isaac D'Israeli; and as he set out with the avowed object of vindicating the King's *political* as well as literary character, we cannot much wonder that he did not meet with a great measure of success. The productions of his sacred majesty, it must be admitted, are not of that 'polite' order which would spontaneously commend themselves to the fine gentlemen of the eighteenth century; but it is somewhat curious, nevertheless, that they should

have been so airily dismissed by a literary antiquary like Horace Walpole.

James commenced author in 1584, at the age of 18, with a little volume entitled *The Essays of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poesie*, and he followed this up, seven years later, with some *Poetical Exercises at Vacant Hours*. The poetry need not detain us long. Even James himself seems to have set no great store by it; for when his writings were collected together in one folio volume, under the editorship of Bishop Montague, in 1616, no part of these two little volumes was reprinted. The best piece is *Ane Schort Poeme of Tyme*, in which the young author relates how, one fine day, as he was walking and thinking, and watching men at their labour,—

'Yet ydle man devysing did I see,
How for to dryve the time that did them irk
By sindrie pastymes, quhill that it grew mirk.

Then woundred I to see them seik a wyle
So willingly the precious tyme to tyne:
And how they did themselves so far begyle
To fash of tyme, which of itself is sine.
Fra tyme bypast to call it backward syne
Is bot in vayne: therefore men should be warr
To sleuth the tyme that flees fra them so farr.

For what hath man bot tyme into this lyfe,
Which gives him dayis his God to knaw:
Wherefore then sould we be at sic a stryfe

So spedelie our selfis for to withdraw
Even from the tyme which is on noways slaw
To flie from us, suppose us fled it noght?
More wise we were if we the tyme had soght.'

The idea is commonplace enough; but it is one of those commonplaces which can never be too much insisted upon, and the expression of it is far from despicable. Appended to the earlier volume is a short, and rather schoolboyish treatise on the art of poetry, which has the merit, at any rate, as the author points out, of being the first written in our (*i.e.* the Scottish) language. In this little treatise he gravely sets forth such rules as that a line of verse must neither be begun nor ended with a long word; that a whole line composed of monosyllables is to be eschewed; that alliteration is an advantage on occasion; and that lines should not be padded out with words unnecessary to the sense. The writer of love-poetry is naïvely warned that all the obvious things have been said already, so that he will do well to praise other qualities than his mistress's fairness or shape—

'Or elles ze sall speik some lytill thing of it, and syne say that zour wittis are sa smal, and zour utterance sa barren that ze can not discryve any part of her worthelie.'

If it should be necessary to treat of so hackneyed a subject as morning or sunrise, the young Scottish poet is urged to vary his terms as much as possible,—'as gif ze call the Sunne *Titan* at a tyme, to call him *Phœbus*

or *Apollo* the other tyme.' So far, all is mere prentice work, and, except for one or two indications that James had already got that notion of the Divine Right of Kings which was afterwards to breed so much mischief, is of no particular interest or importance.

But in 1597, when, after a long struggle, he had at length got the upper hand of his turbulent nobles and seated himself firmly on the Scottish throne, a very different subject fascinated James's imagination. About that time he learned to his astonishment, that a certain Reginald Scott, an Englishman, had 'not been ashamed' to impeach the orthodox doctrine as to witchcraft; and a certain German physician, named Wier or Wierus, had had the temerity to denounce the severity of the laws which had been passed for the punishment of witches and wizards. This appeared to be a very dangerous heresy, and James, having unhappily had some personal experience in the matter, felt himself called upon to intervene. Was it not well known that Bothwell had consulted with witches to aid him in his conspiracy against the throne? And was it not a matter of common notoriety that nothing but witchcraft had caused the storm by which the King's ships were endangered when he returned from Denmark with his bride? He was therefore fully persuaded not only of the reality of witchcraft, but also of its intimate alliance with treason; and, after presiding at several trials, and hearing a number of confessions from the

lips of some of the miscreants themselves, he judged himself peculiarly well qualified to expound the truth of the matter. His tractate on Demonology, written in the form of a dialogue between 'Philomathes' and 'Epistemon,' is divided into three parts; the first treats of magic and necromancy, the second of sorcery and witchcraft, and the third of ghosts. And we need hardly state that it is full of the most highly curious 'information.' Witches, we are told, are merely servants and slaves to the Devil; but necromancers are to some extent his masters; that is to say, the Devil 'obliges himself in some trifles' to the latter—though, of course, only in order the better to obtain final possession of them, soul and body. To some he will appear in the likeness of a dog, a cat, or an ape; to others, 'of a more curious sort,' he will be a continual attendant in the form of a page; and occasionally he will even permit himself to be confined for the space of so many years in a tablet or a ring. He brings his familiars news from any part of the world, and reveals to them the secrets of any persons which they may require, 'so being they be once spoken,' for, although the Devil is able to guess a good deal by means of his singular skill in physiognomy, yet a man's unspoken thoughts are really known to God alone. He also teaches his familiars various arts, and sciences, and jugglery tricks, 'being so learned a knave as he is.' But a curious distinction is alleged to exist between God's miracles and those of the Devil.

When Moses' rod was cast down, we are assured, God turned it into a real serpent; but when Pharaoh's magicians cast their rods down the Devil merely turned them into what 'to men's outward senses' appeared to be serpents; that is to say, to put it into modern phrase, the Devil hypnotised the whole company present. The Devil because he is God's ape, (*i.e.* imitator), convenes his servants together to adore him; and on these occasions witches are transported through the air or over earth or sea, to whatever place may be appointed for their meeting. And, when they have duly adored him, it is at these meetings that he confers upon them certain powers whereby they may work out their wicked wills:—

'To some . . . he teacheth how to make pictures of wax or clay, that by the continual roasting thereof the persons that they bear the name of may be continually melted or dried away by continual sicknesse. To some he gives such stones or boulders as will help to cure or cast on diseases. And to some he teacheth kinds of uncouth poisons, which Medeciners understand not. . . . They can raise storms and tempests in the aire, either upon sea or land. . . . They can make folks to become Phrenticque or Maniacque. . . They can make spirits either to follow and trouble persons, or haunt certain houses. . . . And they can make some to be possessed with spirits.'

When Philomathes asks the rather pertinent question why it is that for one man given to this strange craft there can be found twenty women, the sage Epistemon cheerfully replies—

'The reason is easie; for as that sexe is frailer than man is, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Divell, as was over well proved to be true by the Serpent's deceiving Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sex sen sine.'

The treatise on Demonology is far from exhibiting James as an apostle of either sweetness or light; but at the same time it is hardly fair to quote it in evidence of his excessive and exceptional superstition and credulity. For it must be remembered that in his day the belief in witchcraft was universal: that half a century later the hanging of witches was cordially approved of by godly Mr. Richard Baxter; that, later still, the famous Sir Thomas Browne gave evidence convicting two poor women of witchcraft, when they were sentenced to death by the venerable Sir Matthew Hale; and that the laws against 'conjuration, witchcraft, sorcery, or inchantment' remained in force in this country until they were repealed by the 9. Geo. II. c. 5. Even so late as 1765, a lawyer like Blackstone had his doubts about the matter, and in his famous *Commentaries* he tells us that to deny the existence of witchcraft is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God. The many impostures that have been discovered in all ages would be enough, he admits, to shake one's faith in so dubious a crime, 'were not the contrary evidence also extremely strong'; and the only conclusion at which he can arrive is that 'in general

there has been such a thing as witchcraft though one cannot give credit to any particular modern instance of it.'

James certainly possessed the pen of a ready writer; for, having thus vindicated the orthodox doctrine concerning witchcraft, for the benefit of his people in general, he must have at once turned to the composition of a more comprehensive treatise on the theory of 'King-Craft,' for the benefit of his son and heir in particular. *Basilikon Dōron, or His Majesty's Instructions to his Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince,* which existed in manuscript in 1598, was apparently not originally intended for general publication. Seven copies were printed for the royal use, by a printer sworn to secrecy; but, either from the report of those who had heard passages of it read, or from garbled extracts which somebody had been able to make, such misrepresentations of its tenour had got abroad that James resolved to issue a public edition. The late Professor Henry Morley said, in his introduction to a reprint of the book in 1888, that this published edition first appeared in London and Edinburgh after James's accession to the English crown. But it is quite evident, from the King's preface addressed 'to the reader,' in which he gives his reasons for publication, and refers to 'a lawful Queene there presently reigning' in England, that the publication took place in Edinburgh before the death of Elizabeth. *Basilikon*

Dōron, both in style and matter, is a great advance on the *Demonologie*; and, from the personal point of view, it is the most interesting of James's works; for, as he himself says, having been written in secret, and only published from a sort of necessity, it contains 'the true image of my very mind.' The keynote of the book is struck in a prefatory sonnet, which shows that the king's improvement in literary style was not confined to his prose. Indeed, it may well be here quoted as exhibiting the high-water mark of his achievement in poetry.

'God gives not kings the stile of Gods in vaine,
For on his throne his sceptre doe they swey:
And as their subjects ought them to obey,
So kings should feare and serve their God againe.
If then ye would enjoy a happie raigne,
Observe the statutes of your heavenly King,
And from his Law make all your Lawes to spring:
Since his Lieutenant here ye should remaine,
Reward the just, be steadfast, true, and plaine,
Represse the proud, maintaining aye the right,
Walke alwaies so, as ever in his sight
Who guards the godly, plaguing the profane:
And so ye shall in Princely virtues shine,
Resembling right your mightie King Divine.'

The treatise is divided into three parts or books. Book I. treats of a king's Christian duty towards God, and warns the prince that, by reason of that fierce light which beats upon a throne, 'a mote in another's eye is a beame into yours; a blemish in

another is a leprouse byle into you; and a veniall sinne (as the Papists call it) in another, is a great crime in you.' He must neither think it enough to abstain from evil and do no good, nor think that if he does many good things, that will serve as a cloak for any evil deeds. He should call himself to account once in every twenty-four hours for all the deeds of the past day; and deem it more important to be truly virtuous in deed than to be called and thought so. In fact, this first book is just such a sermon as a fearless and eloquent archbishop might well have delivered to any prince.

It is in the second book that the art of King-Craft (with special reference to Scotland) is set forth and explained. The king puts his finger on what he calls the 'special vices' of each of the three estates of the realm. Those of the Church are pride, ambition, and avarice, which he takes to be 'the natural sicknesse of all churches.' In Scotland particularly, says James, in a burst of violent indignation, certain fiery-spirited men amongst the clergy hope to found a democratic form of government:—

'Take heede therefore (my Sonne) to such Puritanes, very Pestes in the Church and commonweale; whom no deserts can oblige; neither oaths nor promises binde, breathing nothing but sedition and calumnies; aspyring without meesure, rayling without reason, and making their own imaginations (without any warrant of the worde) the square of their conscience. I protest before the Great God (and since I am heere as upon my

Testament it is no place for me to lie in) that ye shall never find with any Hie-land or Border thieves greater ingratitude, and moe lies than with these phanatic spirites. And suffer not the principalles of them to brooke your land, if ye like to sit at rest: except ye would keep them for trying your patience, as Socrates did an evill wife.'

In his preface to the published edition, James is careful to explain that passages such as the above have been wrongly reported as implying a vindictive feeling towards 'some principalles' in England; that he was writing solely about those ministers of religion in Scotland who meddled in state affairs; and that by Puritans he means the Anabaptists, who 'account all men prophane that swears not to all their fantasies.' The 'special vice' of the nobility is stated to be a 'fetless arrogant conceit of their greatnesse and power,' and the prince is warned that while the worthy amongst the nobility must always be 'your armes and executors of your laws,' it is most necessary that the barbarous feuds which have been such a curse to Scotland should be rooted out; and directions are given for certain reformations, 'to begin at your elbowe, and so by degrees to flowe to the extremeties of the land.' The 'vices' of the common people are various. In addition to the one great fault which all classes have of judging and speaking rashly of their prince, the merchants 'count it lawful gaine and trade to enrich themselves upon the loss of all the rest of

the people'; and the craftsmen 'think we should be content with their work, howe bad and deare so ever it be.' Three hundred years do not seem to have made much difference in these matters! One curious recommendation in this connection, however, is particularly interesting in view of our present controversy as to alien immigration. The prince is advised to—

'Take example of England, howe it hath flourished, both in wealth and policie, since the strangers craftsmen came in amongst them. Therefore not only permit, but allure strangers to come here also.'

He is enjoined to visit the principal parts of his country, in order to become acquainted with the nature and humours of his people; to choose servants of good fame, and without blemish; and to employ every man according to his gifts. It will be well for him to marry early, and to seek a wife who is beautiful, and wealthy, and of his own religion. He must be well versed in authentic histories of all nations; but the mention of this subject brings on another explosion of wrath, and he exclaims—'I mean not of such infamous invectives as Buchanan's or Knox's Chronicles; and if any of these infamous libels remain, untill your daies, use the law upon the keepers thereof.' James had already done his best to prevent the survival of both these hated books by proclaiming them at 'the Mercat Cross,' and ordering every possessor thereof to deliver up his copy under penalty of a heavy fine.

Once again he is obliged to hit out at the refractory clergy, and their abuse of the pulpit:—

'If ever ye would have peace in your land, suffer them not to meddle in that place with the estate or policie: but punish sevearlie the first that presumeth to it. Do nothing towards them without a good ground and warrant; but reason not much with them: for I have over-much surfeited them with that, and it is not their fashion to yeeld.'

When the Prince has once settled his country, but not till then, may he venture to temper justice with mercy; and there are some horrible crimes which are never to be forgiven, notably witchcraft, and the making of false coin.

The third book of the *Basilikon Dōron* treats of 'a king's behaviour in indifferent things,' which things are quaintly divided into two categories,—(1) 'things indifferent but necessary,' such as food, raiment, speaking, writing; and (2) 'things indifferent but not necessary, though convenient and lawful,' such as exercises and pastimes. A prince should always eat in public, and his table should be honourably served; but his food should be simple, and he must beware of drunkenness, 'which is a beastly vice, especially in a king.' He should be moderate in his raiment, always proper, cleanly, and comely, sometimes richly, sometimes plainly dressed, according to the occasion, following the fashion, but never condescending to effeminacy. He must not be over-sparing in his courtesies, lest he

be thought uncivil and arrogant, nor, on the other hand, over-prodigal in 'jowking and nodding at every step.' In speech, he should be plain and natural, short and sententious, avoiding 'corrupt and rusticall' words on the one hand, and 'pen and ink-horne terms' on the other. And in case, like his father, he should have a bent towards literary work—

'Use a plaine, shorte but stately stile, both in your Proclamations and missives. . . . And if your engine spurre you to write any workes, either in verse or in prose, I cannot but allow you to practise it; but take no longsome works in hand, for distracting you from your calling. . . . And if ye write in verse, remember that it is not the principall parte of a poëme to rime right, and flowe well with many pretty wordes: but the chief commendation of a poëme is, that when the verse shall be shaken sundry in prose, it shall be found so ritch in quick inventions and poëticke floures, and in faire and pertinent comparisons, as it shall retain the lustre of a poëme although in prose. And I would also advise you to write in your owne language; for there is nothing left to be saide in Greeke and Latine already . . . and besides that, it best becometh a king to purifie and make famous his owne tongue.'

It is said that the publication of the *Basilikon Dōron* materially conduced to James's peaceful accession to the English throne. Each of the conflicting parties found something in it to raise its own hopes, while all seemed to see in this 'true image of my very mind' the lineaments of a wise, liberal, accomplished, dignified, and (except as regarded the Anabaptists) not intolerant

Prince. How far the reality was from conforming to this 'image,' we all know. It was one of James's own maxims that an author may be wise, but his work foolish. If we wished to establish the converse of that proposition, there could be no better illustration than a comparison of the advice tendered to Prince Henry in the *Basilikon Dōron* with the writer's own conduct after his accession to the English throne. But James is by no means the only author who has been unable to reck his own rede.

One other work remains to be noticed, namely the famous (though little read) *Counterblaste to Tobacco*, which was published in 1604. Tobacco had been introduced into England some time during the reign of Elizabeth. James seems to attribute its introduction to Raleigh, whom (though not for this particular offence) he had in the previous year sent to the Tower. But notwithstanding the persistent tradition to this effect, there is little room for doubt that tobacco was first brought in by Sir John Hawkins, on his return from his second voyage in 1565, and that the habit of smoking it was first made familiar to Englishmen by the Colonists who were taken out to Virginia by Lane in 1585, and brought home by Drake in the following year. One of the characters in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* holds and affirms, 'before any Prince in Europe,' that tobacco is 'the most soveraigne and most pretious herbe that ever the

earth tendred to the use of man.' Paul Hentzner, in the account of his travels in England in 1598, describes the English as 'constantly smoking the Nicotian weed.' And a year later, the satirical Henry Buttes declares that '*Fumi-vendulus* is the best epithete for an Apothecary.' There was, however, much conflict of opinion on the subject of smoking, and James, soon after his arrival in London, placed himself at the head of the anti-tobacco party. Regarded as a controversial pamphlet, the *Counterblaste* is by no means a despicable production, however much may be conceded to Horace Walpole on the score of its politeness. After pouring ridicule on the alleged reasons for its use among the 'beastly Indians,' whom civilised Englishmen should be ashamed to imitate, James goes on to examine the various arguments, mostly of a medicinal character, which had been brought forward in support of the practice by Europeans. In answer to the assertion that tobacco is useful because dry and hot things are beneficial to our cold and moist brains, he argues, firstly, that tobacco is *not* of a dry and hot quality; and, secondly, that even if it were it would do no good, for the application of contraries is an absurdity :—

'As if a man, because his liver is hote (as the fountaine of blood) and as it were an oven to the stomacke, would therefore apply and weare close upon his Liver and stomacke a cake of lead; he might within a very short time be sustained

very good cheepe at an Ordinaire, beside the clearing of his conscience from that deadly sin of gluttonie.'

Of course the king's physiology and therapeutics are those of three hundred years ago; but the argument that people would not have taken so general a liking to tobacco if they had not by experience found it good for them, he meets by some very apposite remarks on the despotism of fashion which are by no means out of date:—

'Doe we not dayly see that a man can no sooner bring over from beyond the seas any new forme of apparell but that he cannot be thought a man of spirit that would not presently imitate the same? And so from hand to hand it spreads till it be practised by all, not for any commoditie that is in it but only because it is come to be the fashion. For such is the force of that natural selfe-love in every one of us, and such is the corruption of envie bred in the brest of every one, as we cannot be content unlesse we imitate everything that our fellowes doe, and so prove ourselves capable of everything whereof they are capable.'

The confirmed smoker may allege various other (and admittedly excellent) reasons for his devotion to the weed; but neither in James's day nor in our own could any other reason than the foregoing be given for the first nausea-provoking efforts of the beginner. For the rest, we might almost imagine the king to be taking up his parable against some of the preposterous advertisements put forward by our modern patent-medicine vendors:—

'Because peradventure when a sick man hath had his disease at the height, he hath at that instant taken tobacco, and afterwards his disease taking the natural course of declining, and consequently the patient of recovering his health, O then the tobacco forsooth was the worker of that miracle! . . . And what greater absurditie can there be than to say that one cure shall serve for divers, nay contrarious, sorts of diseases. . . . Such is the miraculous omnipotence of our strong tasted tobacco as it cures all sorts of diseases (which never any drugge could doe before) in all persons, and at all times. It cures all manner of distillations, either in the head or stomacke (if you believe their Axiomes) . . . It cures the Gowt in the feet. . . . It helps all sorts of Agues. It makes a man sober that was drunke. It refreshes a weary man, and yet makes a man hungry. Being taken when they goe to bed, it makes one sleepe soundly, and yet, being taken when a man is sleepie and drowsie, it will, as they say, awake his braine and quicken his understanding. . . . O omnipotent power of tobacco! And if it could by the smoke thereof chase out divels, as the smoke of *Tobias* fish did (which I am sure could smell no stronglier) it would serve for a precious Relicke, bothe for the superstitious Priests and the insolent Puritans to cast out divels withal.'

James seems to have had decidedly the best of the argument; and, as he followed up the *Counterblaste* by a proclamation raising the duty on tobacco from twopence to six shillings and tenpence a pound, it might be thought that he would have been able to banish it, not only from his court, but from his kingdom. But *magna est tabacum, et prævalebit*! Only ten years later, Barnabee Rich, in a pamphlet entitled *The Honestie of this Age*, informs us that in

London alone there were then upwards of seven thousand houses where the detestable and deleterious weed might be procured by the ever-increasing army of smokers.

Besides the works of which we have here given a brief account, James made several, more or less notable, contributions to political and theological controversy, but in these one could hardly hope to interest the modern reader. Of course it cannot be contended that he was any more a great writer than he was a great king. But his prose works (for it must be admitted that his poetry is a negligible quantity) are still worth reading, not merely for the indication they afford of the general state of opinion in the seventeenth century, but also for the wit, and canny humour, and occasional bursts of eloquence with which the king sets forth the ideas of a mind of considerable shrewdness and intellectual power. 'It seemeth much in a king,' says Bacon, 'if by the compendious extraction of other men's wits and labours he can take hold of any superficial ornaments and shows of learning.' But James was to the manner born, Nature having given him far more of the temperament of a scholar than of a king. When visiting Bodley's library at Oxford, he is reported to have said: 'Were I not king I would be a University man; and if it were that I must be a prisoner, if I might have my wish, I would have no other prison than this library, and be chained together

with these good authors.' It would have sounded highly absurd at the time, but now, after the lapse of three hundred years, it is an obvious enough remark to make that it would have been better for James, as well as for the country over which he was called to rule, if such had been his fate.

THE MANDEVILLE MYTH

Visitors to the cathedral of St. Albans still have their attention drawn to an old inscription on one of the piers in the long nave of the ancient abbey, setting forth that in that 'Inn of Travellers' repose the remains of Sir John Mandeville. And if they happen to have provided themselves with a copy of the excellent little handbook to the City of St. Albans recently published by the Homeland Association, or with the volume on St. Albans in Bell's 'Cathedral Series,' they will be informed that, although it is a moot point whether this epitaph really marks the place of his burial or not, the celebrated Sir John Mandeville was, at any rate, born in St. Albans, and educated at its grammar-school. At one time, some bones and part of a skull, in a large stone coffin, were proudly shown as the genuine remains of the ancient knight; but as these have long since been given up as spurious, so it has now become extremely doubtful whether the town has any better claim to be the place of his birth than it has to be the place of his burial; any better claim, in fact, than the man himself really has to be the first of English travellers and the 'father of English prose.'

"Sir John Mandeville."
From a drawing in the British Museum.

What modern research has revealed on this subject forms a curious and interesting chapter in literary history.

Early in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the limited reading public which then existed was delighted by the appearance of a volume of travels purporting to have been written by John Mandeville, Knight, of the town of St. Albans in England, and to contain a description of the many wonderful things which he had himself seen in the course of a prolonged wandering which, during the thirty-four years between 1322 and 1356, had extended over about a third part of the known world. This work achieved an immediate and widespread popularity. There are said to be now more fourteenth and early fifteenth century MSS. of Mandeville's travels in existence than of any book except the Holy Scriptures. And on the introduction of printing it was one of the earliest books to be spread broadcast over Europe. A German version appeared at Bâle about 1475; a Dutch version made its appearance about the same date, or, as some think, even earlier. It was printed in Italian, at Milan, in 1480, in French, at Lyons, in 1480 or '81; in Latin, at Antwerp, about 1485. And in 1499, Wynkyn de Worde issued from his press at Westminster the first printed edition of an English version, which he entitled: 'A Lytel Treatise or Booke named John Mandevyll, Knight, born in England, in the town of

Saynt Albone, and speaketh of the ways of the Holy Londe towards Jherusalem, and of Marvyles of Ynde and other diverse Countries.' In 1568 Pynson printed an edition illustrated with reproductions of the extraordinary drawings with which an imaginative monkish copyist had illuminated an old French MS.; and between that date and 1725 there were no less than fifteen editions of this version of the book. Until quite recently no one thought of questioning the author's account of himself, however much they may have been staggered by some of his other relations; and it must be admitted that, on the face of it, that account appears to be quite candid and straightforward.

'I, John Mandeville, Knight [he says], albeit I be not worthy, that was born in England, in the town of Saint Albans, passed the sea in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ in 1322, in the day of Saint Michael, and hitherto have been long time over the sea, and have seen and gone through many diverse lands, and many provinces and kingdoms, and isles, and have passed through Turkey, Armenia the Little and the great, through Tartary, Persia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, the high and the low, through Libia, Chaldea, and a great part of Ethiopia, through Amazonia, Ind, the less and the more a great part, and throughout the many isles that be about Ind, where dwell diverse folks, and of diverse shapes of men. Of which lands and isles I shall speak more plainly hereafter.'

He declares, further, that he entered the service of the Sultan of Egypt, and fought in that potentate's wars against the Bedouins; and that the Sultan used

him very handsomely, and would have married him to a great prince's daughter, if only he would have changed his law and belief; 'but I thank God I had no will to do it, for nothing that he behight me.' Afterwards, he says, in company with four other Christian knights, he entered the service of the Great Khan:—

'And ye shall understand that my fellows and I, with our yeomen, we served this emperor, and were his soldiers, fifteen months, against the King of Maney, that held war against him. And the cause was for we had great lust to see his noblesse and the estate of his court, and all his governance, to wit if it were such as we heard say that it was.'

And, finally, he modestly states that he has been in many a full good and honourable company, and at many a fair deed of arms, albeit he did none himself for his insufficiency; but has now come home to rest, because of arthritic gout that sore distressed him; and that, taking comfort in this 'wretched rest,' he has written an account of his travels, 'as it would come into my mind, the year of grace 1356, in the thirty-fourth year that I departed from our countries.'

For nearly five centuries, the only independent account—if, indeed, except in one particular, it has any claim to be called an independent account—of our author was a notice by John Bale, in his *Catalogue of British Writers* (1548), in which it is stated that John Mandeville, Knight, was born at St. Albans,

that he studied Religion and the Art of Physic, that he committed his whole travel of thirty-four years to writing in three diverse tongues (English, French, and Latin), and that he died at Liége in the year 1371, and was buried there in the abbey of the Gulielmites. This account of 'Mandeville's' burial at Liége was confirmed independently by Jacob Meyer in 1561, by L. Guicciardini in 1567, by Ortelius in 1584, and by Weever, who, in his *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631), while recording an epitaph on Sir John Mandeville to be seen in St. Albans Abbey (*not* the existing epitaph, by the way), remarks that he has recently, with his own eyes, seen the tomb of Sir John in the abbey of the Gulielmites at Liége. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century, nothing more than this was known or surmised concerning the personality of the author of the celebrated *Voyages and Travels.* But in 1866 M. Bormans printed in the *Bibliothèque Belge* an extract made by the *Liége Herald*, Louis Abdy (1643-1720), from the fourth book, now lost, of the *Myreur des Histors* of Jean d'Outremeuse (1338-1399), which placed it beyond a reasonable doubt that the author of the Travels, whoever he may have been, died at Liége (not, as Bale had said, in 1371, but in 1372), and that, while living there, he had passed by the name of Jean de Bourgogne, *dit à la Barbe*, and had practised as a physician. On his deathbed he is stated to have confided to his friend

Jean d'Outremeuse that he was 'Messire Jean de Mandeville, Chevalier, Comte de Montforte en Angleterre, et Seigneur de l'isle de Campdi du Château Pérouse'; and that, having had the misfortune to kill a nobleman in his own country, he had bound himself to travel over three parts of the world. Putting on one side the matter of being Comte de Montfort, etc., subsequent research has hitherto failed to find any trace of a Sir John Mandeville in England, either at St. Albans or elsewhere, about the date necessary to fit in with the account given of himself by the author of the Travels. But, curiously enough, there was a John de Mandeville who got into trouble for being concerned in the death of Piers Gaveston in 1312; and, more curiously still, there was a John de Bourgogne who incurred the royal displeasure for taking part against the Despensers in 1321. 'Mandeville,' it will be remembered, states that he set out on his travels in 1322, and that he did not return until 1356. But Jean d'Outremeuse tells us that Jean de Bourgogne came to Liége in 1343. At the same time, it is hard to see the alleged 'impossibility' of either the Jean de Mandeville who was concerned in the death of Piers Gaveston in 1312, or of the John de Bourgogne who took part against the Despensers in 1321, being identified with the man who died at Liége in 1372; though, of course, up to the present, not a tittle of evidence has been discovered in proof of such identifica-

tion. A further complication, however, is provided for us in the Latin version of the Travels. In it the author states that while at Liége in 1355, on his way home, he was confined to bed by an attack of arthritic gout, and that, on calling in a physician of the place, known as John ad Barbam, he at once recognised this doctor as an old acquaintance whom he had met years before at Cairo. It was, he declares, at Liége, by the advice and with the help of this physician, that he composed the account of his travels, which otherwise would not have been written until after his return to England. It is a very pretty puzzle. Two John de Mandevilles, two John de Bourgognes, *dit à la Barbe*, and one of the latter confessing on his deathbed that his real name was Mandeville! But we need not assume that the last word has even yet been said on the subject: it was nearly five hundred years after the events which it recorded that M. Bormans unearthed the curious extract from Jean d'Outremeuse's *Myreur des Histors*; and it may still remain for some literary Sherlock Holmes to discover a clue to the whole mystery.

We may now turn from what modern criticism has had to say about the author to what it has revealed about his book. For three hundred years or more 'Mandeville's' marvellous stories were generally accepted in unquestioning good faith; and although, in the sceptical eighteenth century, an occasional critic,

such as Addison, may have hinted a doubt, and ironically complimented 'our renowned countryman' on 'the copiousness of his *invention*,' nothing more was alleged against him than a little extra indulgence in the traveller's proverbial fondness for 'drawing the long bow.' The anonymous editor of an edition of the Travels published in 1725 (an imperfect version from the Cotton MS., which has remained the standard text down to our own day), not only declared that Sir John was a man of learning and substance, and a 'conscientious good man,' but after cheerfully admitting that his author had 'taken monsters out of Pliny, miracles out of Legends, and Strange Stories out of what will now be called Romances,' triumphantly turned the tables, as he thought, on all possible objectors by quaintly asking: 'If old authors must be rejected for putting strange stories and improbabilities into their history, what will become of Venerable Bede, Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the rest of our English Historians?' Isaac D'Israeli, in his entertaining *Amenities of Literature*, went even greater lengths. He would have 'Mandeville' accepted as 'the Bruce of the Fourteenth Century,' and calls him one of the most 'cautious' as well as 'ingenious' of voyagers. Even as late as 1842 a writer in the *Archæologist* contended that 'Sir John Mandeville's' probity remains unimpeached; for the accuracy of whatever he relates from his own personal observation has been confirmed by

subsequent travellers.' And the belief in Mandeville of St. Albans as an English writer persisted long after it had become impossible to maintain the accuracy of his 'strange stories of diverse lands'; the literary handbooks of Professors Minto and Henry Morley, for instance, giving him the title of 'the Father of English prose.' Yet, however reluctant one may be to remove the old knight from his pedestal, it must be admitted that there is no evidence of his having travelled further east than Palestine,—if he even went so far; that the account of his alleged experiences is mostly a compilation from the writings of previous travellers; that his book was not originally written in English, as some of the MS. copies erroneously claim; and that it is very doubtful whether the author had any right even to the name by which for five hundred years and more he has been popularly known.

The first attack on the Mandeville myth was made by Sir Henry Yule, in an article in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; and the matter was further pursued, in great detail, and with much learning, by Mr. G. F. Warner, in his splendid edition of *The Buke of John Maundevil*, printed for the Roxburghe Club in 1889. These authorities have shown, beyond the possibility of dispute, that a great part of our undoubtedly 'ingenious' author's account of his travels in distant lands was appropriated from William of Boldensele's account of his visit to the Holy Places in

1332-3, and from the work of Friar Oderico de Pordenone, whose account of his embassy to the Great Khan was written in 1331; that some of the Asiatic geography and travel was taken bodily from the book of a princely Armenian named Hayton, who became a monk, and dictated a record of his previous travels in 1307; that the account of the manners and customs of the Tartars was taken from a book by the Franciscan, John of Carpini; that the description of Prester John is from the reputed epistle of that imaginary potentate; and that most of the fabulous stories of cyclopes, hypopodes, weeping crocodiles, and so forth, were reproduced from Solinus's Compendium of Pliny. Sir Henry Yule was inclined to admit that the earlier part of 'Mandeville's' book, which treats of the Holy Land and of the ways thereto, as well as that part which concerns Egypt and what we understand by the Levant, showed evidences of knowledge acquired by actual travel; and he was inclined to credit the author with some knowledge of Arabic, and probably some personal acquaintance with the Bedouins. But Mr. Warner will not admit even so much. He has traced certain passages of the Travels of Peter Comestor, to Vincent de Beauvais, to Brunetto Latini, and to Jacques de Vitry; he shows that the route 'Mandeville' describes through Hungary to Constantinople is a blundering plagiarism from the *History of the First Crusade* by Albert of Aix; and he points out that our author has

applied Cæsar's account of the customs of the ancient Britons, almost word for word, to the inhabitants of one of his numerous and altogether imaginary islands. In fact, he seems to have succeeded in tracing to some earlier source almost every statement in 'Mandeville's' book which cannot plausibly be attributed to an exercise of the author's own imagination. And he has certainly convicted our veracious 'traveller' of misunderstanding and mistranslating some of the authors from whom he borrowed. It has also been conclusively shown that our English, as well as the contemporary Latin versions, were made from a French original, and, moreover, the existence of certain blunders in both the English and the Latin translations make it equally clear that all the various versions could not have been, as has generally been supposed, from the same hand. In the prologue of the earliest existing French MS., which is dated 1371, and is now in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* of Paris, the following sentence occurs: 'Et saichais q̃ je usse cet livret mis en latin pour plus briefment deviser. Mais pour ce que pluseurs entendent mieulx romant que latin je lay mis en romãt par quoy q̃ chacun lentende.' The meaning of this is perfectly plain. The author says he *would have* put the book into Latin in order to be more concise, but that, knowing more people understood Romance (*i.e.* French) than Latin, he *has* put it into Romance, so that everybody may understand it. In the Latin versions this sentence does not appear.

But in the Cotton MS. of the British Museum the sentence is mistranslated thus: 'And ye shall understand that I have put this book out of Latin into French, and translated it again out of French into English, that every man of my nation may understand it.' This misrepresentation of an anonymous translator (whether ignorantly or purposely made is not to the point) constitutes the only foundation for 'Mandeville's' long undisputed claim to be the father of our English prose.

Whoever 'Mandeville' may have been, however, it is evident that he was what we should now call a man of the world, and that he had received an education far above that which usually fell to the lot of an English gentleman of the fourteenth century. It is probable, notwithstanding all that has been advanced to the contrary, that he had spent some years in travel; although it is certain that he did not go so far as he would have his readers believe. And he was unquestionably the master of a literary talent of no mean order. 'Mandeville's' time was not an age of newspapers like this of ours; but rumours of the conquests of Zingis Khan and his successors, and of the shipwreck of the nations from which even Constantinople and the Greek Empire had barely escaped, had excited not only the learned but the whole populace of Europe. It was known that the Pope had sent ambassadors to powerful kings in the far East, and that certain adventurous spirits, both of the military and the mercantile order, had followed in their

wake. Great as men's liking has ever been to hear 'strange things of diverse countries,' that liking has never been stronger than at this particular time. And John de Mandeville, John de Bourgogne, or whoever he was, rose to the occasion. Evidently starting with the intention of merely writing a sort of guide-book for pilgrims to the Holy Land, it soon seems to have dawned upon him that he might also make his book at the same time a *vade mecum* of popular information about the world in general. Indeed, there is a paragraph towards the end of the book in which he expressly states as much. On his journey home, he says, he went to Rome and saw the Pope, and there, among other things—

'I showed him this treatise that I had made, *after information of men that knew of things that I had not seen myself*, and also of marvels and customs that I had seen myself, as far as God would give me grace; and besought his holy fatherhood that my book might be examined and corrected by advice of his wise and discreet counsel.'

This passage, however, is by some held to be one of the author's falsehoods, and by others to be a spurious interpolation of some copyist, because between 1309 and 1397 the Popes resided not at Rome but at Avignon. But it must be remembered that the earliest MS. now in existence (that in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris) cannot be dated earlier than 1371; and it seems at least equally possible that an ignorant copyist may

have presumed to correct his author, or that he may inadvertently have written 'Rome' in his transcript when 'Avignon' was correctly given in the original. However that may be, there are other unquestioned passages from which a similar inference may be drawn. For example :—

'And albeit that these things touch not to our way, nevertheless they touch to that that I have hight you, to show you a part of the customs and manners and diversities of countries. . . . For many men have great liking to hear of strange things of diverse countries.'

Regarding the charge of fraudulent plagiarism so strongly urged against our author, all that can be pleaded in mitigation of judgment is that it was a common practice for writers of the Middle Ages to quote extensively from other authors, without any express acknowledgment. 'And so do men in other ages, God amend it when his will is,' as 'Mandeville' remarks concerning another matter.

The book certainly did become the most popular compendium of information about the world in general, not only in what was presumed to be the author's own country, but throughout Europe. Several generations of our forefathers learned all that they ever knew of Egypt and Syria, Arabia and Turkey, China and India, and 'the many other isles that are about,' from his graphic narrative. That, at the same time, they learned a good deal about things that never existed,

either in the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth, might almost go without the saying. 'Mandeville' has been accused of 'drawing the long-bow' with even greater licence than the friars of his generation, who, according to Piers Plowman, made their pilgrimage to Rome, and then—

> 'Had lieve to lie
> All their life after.'

But it is highly probable that the credulity of the author was much on a par with the child-like ignorance, and eagerness for marvels of the public for whom he wrote. We may, at any rate, give him credit for setting down in perfect good faith an account of all the various sacred relics which a pilgrim to the Holy Land would wish to see; and we need not be very greatly surprised to find that an enthusiastic Roman Catholic, treading as he was on holy ground, did not show what would nowadays be a proper and healthy scepticism. On one occasion, his evident perplexity is extremely amusing. Having been shown the head of John the Baptist at Amiens in Picardy, and again at Sebaste, he declares that he knows not which head is to be preferred, and quaintly gets out of the difficulty by presuming that 'however men worship it, the blessed Saint John is satisfied.' He goes so far as to give a description of the four rivers which rise in terrestrial Paradise; but of Paradise itself he says: 'Ne can not I speak properly, for I was not there.'

As to certain other wonders of which he tells, we must remember that ever since Homer's Ulysses told Alcinous about one-eyed Cyclopes, and wild men with many heads, and Seirens, and enchantresses who turned men into swine, any traveller would have been discredited by his stay-at-home countrymen if he had not treated them to an account of somewhat similar wonders. And very probably the traveller himself firmly believed that such wondrous things were really to be seen somewhere, even although he had not been lucky (or unlucky) enough to come across anything of the kind. 'Mandeville' certainly gave his readers their fill of such things; and although it is by no means wonderful that he should share the common belief of his time in the existence of such monstrosities, it is certainly strange that some of his relations did not stagger Isaac D'Israeli's faith in the traveller's 'caution' and 'exactness,' if not altogether in his 'ingenuity.' It must, however, in justice be conceded to 'Mandeville,' that he does not always vouch for the accuracy of every story he tells. The relation is frequently prefaced by the cautionary words 'and men say,' while in some cases he even takes care to add 'but I have not seen these things myself.'

'Mandeville's' narrative, however, is by no means entirely fabulous. And it is curious to reflect that his account (whether original or derived) of certain things which to us are commonplaces, would have appeared

to the writer's contemporaries far more incredible than islands full of one-legged people, or a race of men with dogs' heads. The belief that our earth is a flat plain, for instance, prevailed during 'Mandeville's' time, and for many generations after. Yet, strange to say, our author declares that he knows it to be a round globe. He writes :—

'I tell you certainly that men may environ all the earth of all the world, as well under as above, and return again to his country, that had company, and shipping, and conduct; and always he would find men, and lands, and isles, as well as in this country. For ye wit well that they that be toward the Antarctic they be straight feet against feet of them that dwell under the Transmontane. . . . And right as the shipmen take their advice here, and govern them by the Lode-star, right so do shipmen beyond these parts by the star of the south, the which star appeareth not to us. And this star that is towards the north, that we clepen the Lode-star, ne appeareth not to them. For which cause men may well perceive that the land and the sea be of round shape and form. For the part of the firmament showeth in one country that showeth not in the other country.'

This is certainly explicit and unequivocal enough, and he has more to say on the same head. But it would appear that he could not properly assimilate so strange a fact, for he finds some difficulty in explaining why our Antipodeans do not fall off into space; and in another part of the book he expressly states, and gives fallacious reasons for, the current belief, that Jerusalem was in the centre of the world. In his account of

Egypt he gives a very good description of the Nile; which, however, he informs the reader is the same river as the Gyson, and comes out of terrestrial Paradise. He also holds that the Pyramids were granaries built by Joseph as storehouses in the time of the great famine. Then he gives a glowing description of the Phœnix, with its yellow neck, blue head, yellow and red tail, and purple wings, which, he says, is 'a full fair bird to look upon against the sun, for he shineth full gloriously and nobly.' Immediately following this fancy picture, however, is a plain and sober description of the artificial incubation practised by the Egyptians, a process which probably appeared to his contemporaries every whit as marvellous as the reincarnation of the other bird. In his account of Cairo, he says:—

'And there is a common house in that city that is all full of small furnaces; and hither bring women of the town their eyren of hens, of geese, and of ducks, for to put in those furnaces. And they that keep that house cover them with heat of horse-dung, without hen, or goose, or duck, or any other fowl; and at the end of three weeks, or of a month, they come again and take their hatched chickens, and nourish them, and bring them forth; so that all the country is full of them. And so do men there both winter and summer.'

He gives a rapid, and somewhat quaint, but not inaccurate, account of Mohammed and the religion of the Koran; and relates a remarkable conversation which he says he had with his patron the Sultan

on the comparative shortcomings of Christian men. Whereupon he moralises :—

'Alas! that it is great slander to our faith and to our law, when folk that be without law should reprove us and undermine us of our sins? . . . And truly they say sooth. For the Saracens be good and faithful. For they keep entirely the commandment of the holy book, Alkaron.'

But our author takes care to put into the mouth of his friend the Sultan another sentence or two which would sound more pleasing to the ears of Christian readers in Europe, who were still grieving for the loss of their Crusader's Kingdom of Jerusalem :—

'For we know well in very sooth [continues the Mohammedan Prince] that when ye serve God, God will help you; and when he is with you, no man may be against you. And that know we well by our prophecies, that Christians shall win again this land out of our hands when they serve God more devoutly.'

Among the strange things of diverse lands of which our traveller gives account are some which have a quite modern and up-to-date appearance. The fraudulent adulteration of commercial goods, for instance, might be thought a characteristic of our modern competitive civilisation; but it appears to have been in full swing in Egypt in the fourteenth century. 'Mandeville' warns the pilgrim :—

'And wit ye well that a man ought to take a good keep for to buy balm, but if he can know it right well, for he may right lightly be deceived. For men sell a gum that men clepe

turpentine instead of balm, and they put thereto a little balm for to give good odour. And some put wax in oil of the wood of the fruit of the balm, and say that it is balm. And some distil cloves of Gilofre and of spikenard of Spain, and of other spices that be well smelling, and the liquor that goeth out thereof they clepe it balm; and they think that they have balm, and they have none. For the Saracens counterfeit it by sublety of craft for to deceive the Christian men, as I have seen full many a time; and after them the merchants and the apothecaries counterfeit it eftsones, and then it is less worth, and a great deal worse.'

A practice which recent Irish history has made familiar to us under the name of Boycotting was the common mode of punishment in one of those numerous isles of the 'Sea of Ocean'; and something closely resembling what we know as hypnotism appears to have been practised in the fourteenth century at the Court of the Great Khan. Whether there were stock-jobbers and company-promoters among the Mongols our traveller does not say, but he reports that Zinghis had discovered the convenience of a paper currency:—

'This Emperor may dispend as much as he will without estimation, for he not dispenseth ne maketh no money but of leather imprinted, or of paper. And of that money some is of greater price and some of less price after the diversity of his statutes. And when that money hath run so long that it beginneth to waste, then men bear it to the Emperor's treasury, and then they take new money for the old. And that money goeth throughout all the country. For there, and beyond there, they make no money neither of gold nor of silver.'

'Mandeville' had an admirable gift for narrative; and we may shrewdly suspect that, like other authors with a talent that way, he was usually minded to leave a story somewhat better than he found it. The story of the Sparrow Hawk, borrowed from a romance called *The History of Melusine*, and the story of Ypocras, are instances in point. His version of how roses came into the world is another tale very quaintly and prettily told. After briefly describing Bethlehem in a few vigorous lines, he goes on:—

'And between the city and the church is the Field Floridus, that is to say the Field Flowering. Forasmuch as a fair maiden was blamed with wrong, and slandered that she had done fornication, for which cause she was demned to death, and to be burnt in that place, to the which she was led. And as the fire began to burn about her, she made her prayer to our Lord, that as wisely she was not guilty of that thing, that he would help her, and make it to be known of all men of his merciful grace. And when she had thus said, she entered into the fire, and anon was the fire quenched and out. And the brands that were burning became red rose-trees, and the brands that were not kindled became white rose-trees, full of roses. And these were the first rose-trees and roses, both white and red, that any man ever saw. And thus was this maiden saved by the Grace of God; and therefore is that field clept "the Field of God's Flowers," for it was full of roses.'

Of course the modern reader must not expect to find scientific information, whether geographical, topographical, historical, or ethnological, in 'Mandeville's'

book. It is impossible to believe that it can ever have been even a useful guide for pilgrims to the Holy Land; for there is not so much as an approximate measurement of the distance between any of the places which the author professes to have visited; the relation of his various journeys is so confused as to be almost unintelligible; and there is not a word anywhere as to means of transport. And yet, after all deductions have been made, and after full consideration of all the objections of the eminent critics who have of late years fallen foul of 'our English Ulysses,' it must be admitted that his lively narrative amply deserves its five centuries of popularity. As M. Jusserand says, the good knight of St. Albans himself—coat of mail, doughty deeds, journeys and all—may have vanished like smoke in the air, but his story remains, and will remain. Notwithstanding the modern rage for brand new books, there is still a select remnant of readers who think none the worse of a work for having survived its author some five hundred years. And in 'Mandeville's' book they will find not only a valuable record of the curious beliefs and conjectures of our ancestors concerning the remoter parts of the world around them, but also a budget of quaint and curious mediæval stories, told with infinite naïveté and charm, as well as what is, if not quite the first, yet one of the earliest, and most significant, specimens of English prose.

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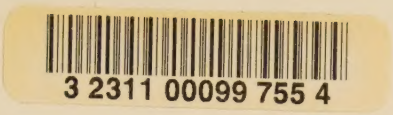
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